Where to Fuck did High Priestess is a Moon, come from.

A small insight into the insanity of tracing everything in esoteric high tales, lies and invented histories about Tarot.

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Warning - This post contains discussion of anti-semitism. It does so in the context of historical conversion attempts and cultural appropriation. It also contains discussion of misogyny.

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Introduction

I was reading an old article by a well known Tarot creator Christine Payne-Towler. And I found myself forming an interesting little thought.

Why the *fuck* Is *The High Priestess* consistently linked to the Moon?

She is the Moon in Papus' tract, Moon for Levi, Moon in Golden Dawn, Moon to many other less-known writers, despite their shake-up of the whole system. That all despite the fact there is a perfectly fine card called Moon right there. So what gives?

To explain esoteric correspondences: every Tarot, every symbol stands for something. Imagine you have a tree. Well, it connects to the Earth element, because it is static, unmoving, bound to ground from which it grows. Making this connection, we can then connect it to, for example, Hades, the Greek God. He was connected explicitly to the element by Greek philosophers. And then, considering how trees connect the underworld and sky, we make connections to the myth of Persephone and return of spring. It's a chain of connections through similarity or shared likeness, very important in esotericism. Most magic systems, (ceremonial or folk) work on how alike things are - by invoking the similarity to higher things, you can attract them, that was the logic. It was not dissimilar from giving deities specific animals you sacrifice to them. "As above as below."

The common tarot correspondences that show up nowadays were those by Golden Dawn, an esoteric society on the break of 20th century. It was alumni of this society that created the blueprints of the majority of decks released now (Waite, Thoth). People use these correspondences even outside of ritual magic even today. Some want astrology knowledge to flavor their cards, or elemental correspondences, or to know how the imagery evolved and why. There are even people who still work with and use these correspondences for magic and meditation.

Golden Dawn hasn't done it alone. They got these ideas from previous esoteric connections and older works with tarot. It is, after all, a well known spiritual tradition. The cards were seen as flash cards, containing all related concepts that an esotericist would need.

And it irked me that the *High Priestess* has been so ubiquitously connected to the Moon. Even if her other correspondence changes, she remains lunary, and moon-like.

An explanation would be to seek it in the Hebrew Letters associations - after all, they are the reason we are in this mess right? The whole astrology association through Hebrew letters thanks to esoteric Qaballah? Well, woosh, it would be fucking crazy if this was hard - after all they all went card-by-card and applied Hebrew letters in order… right?

Oh you poor soul. Divine radiance protects us both.

Most groups who wrote about Tarot worked with different ordering of their decks. This is all the fault of *The Mat, The Fou, The Foo*l, who without a number skips across the deck. In the following table we can see their differences between the deck and which Hebrew letter was assigned to them by a variety of authors.

Hebrew alphabet	Mellet	French School (Levi, Papus, Wirth)	Golden Dawn/Waite
Aleph א	21 Time (World)	1 The Magician	0 The Fool
Beth ב	20 Card badly named the Last Judgment.	2 The Popess	1 The Magician
Gimel ג	19 The Sun	3 The Empress	2 The High Priestess
Daleth ד	18 The Moon	4 The Emperor	3 The Empress
He ה	17 The Dog Star.	5 The Hierophant	4 The Emperor
Vav ו	16 The House of God, or Castle of Plutus.	6 The Lovers	5 The Hierophant
Zayin ז	15 Typhoon (Devil)	7 The Chariot	6 The Lovers
Het ח	14 Temperance	8 Justice	7 The Chariot
Tet ט	13 Death	9 The Hermit	8 The Strength
yod י	12 Prudence (Hanged Man)	10 Wheel of Fortune	9 The Hermit
Kaph כ	11 Fortitude (Strength)	11 Strength	10 The Wheel of Fortune
Lamed ל	10 The Wheel of Fortune	12 The Hanged Man	11 Justice
Mem מ	9 The Sage (Hermit)	13 Unnamed	12. The Hanged

			Man
Nun נ	8 Justice	14 Temperance	13 Death
Samekh ס	7 Osiris Triumphant(Chariot)	15 The Devil	14 Temperance
Ayin ע	6 Marriage	16 The Tower	15 The Devil
Pe פ	5 Hierophant (Pope)	17 The Star	16 The Tower
Tzaddi צ	4 King (Emperor)	18 The Moon	17 The Star
Qof ק	3 Queen (Empress)	19 The Sun	18 The Moon
Resh ר	2 High Priestess	20 The Judgement	19 The Sun
Shin ש	1 Player at Cups (Juggler)	The Fool	20 The Judgement
Tav ת	0 The Fool	21 The World	21 The World

The attribution to the Hebrew letters then follows usually in order. As such, the letters always produce a consistent template laid on top of the deck.

Much to our benefit, every one of these people wrote something about their approach to Tarot and what they see in it. Maybe we can divine something from it, or see where the break occurred. So let's travel across time and space, shall we? As a warning, my only language of use here is English. I will attempt to make use of machine translations and try not to miss anything. But if our journeys take us to French people or Latin, I am at a severe disadvantage.

All Roads Lead to France

Mellet and Gebelin reinvigorate Tarot

The first man to assign Hebrew letters to Tarot cards was Count de Mellet.

He provided a short essay to the book of his bud Gebelín (who is the one who gets ALL the glory of utilising Egyptomania to revive interest in occult Tarot). As such, he is an important source to check. On the way, we can also look at Gebelin's take since he is the star of the show. All of it is in his massive tome called *Monde Primitif, p*ublished in volumes between 1773 and 1782. (As a note he is also the first guy to call *the Popess* by her new name of *High Priestes*s). *Monde Primitif* was a huge inspiration for many esotericists and it's worth examining. My source and translation come from *Essential Tarot Writings* by Donald Tyson.

Number V. represents the leader of the hierophants or the High Priest: Number II. the High Priestess or his wife: it is known that among Egyptians, the leaders of the priesthood were married. If these cards were of modern invention, one would not see one titled the High

Priestess, much less still bearing the name of Papesse, as the German card makers ridiculously titled this one.

The High Priestess sits in an armchair: she wears a long dress with a type of ***veil behind her head which descends to cross over her breas****t: she has a* ***double crown with two horns like that of Isis:*** *she holds a book open on her knees; two scarves furnished with crosses cross on her abdomen and form an X there. (Essential Tarot Writings, Part One, "THE GAME OF TAROTS")*

And fun fact. De Mellet, compared to Gebelin, had access to a Swiss family of decks, which have a peculiar quirk! They replace the *Popess* and *Pope* with *Juno* and *Jupiter (*political pressure and regional variance*)*! So his whole meaning is a bit off, but let's throw it in for good measure.

Second, the pride of power, represented by the peacock, on which Juno pointing to the sky on the right side, and to the earth of the left, announces a terrestrial religion or idolatry. (Essential Tarot Writings, Part One, "STUDY ON THE TAROTS")

Since to Count de Mellet the Tarot was in reversed order (aka shows the Fall of Man from the ideal Golden age of *The World,* into the wretched current state of *The Fool*), the Hebrew letters are also assigned in reverse. Why the connection? To him, this is a remnant of some sort of Ta-Rosh book, imagined hieroglyphs of ancient times, made by wise men to display the events of the mythological Fall of men. But then Egyptians forgot about it and they just became their sacred letters (does it even need to be said that this is wrong?).

These characters were not, in the beginning, conventional signs, and did not express, like our current letters, the sound of the words; they were the same true images that make up the pictures on the cards, which presented to the eyes the things about which one wanted to speak.

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These twenty-two first cards are not only hieroglyphics, which when placed in their natural order recall the history of the earliest times, but they are also as many letters [the Hebrew alphabet is composed of 22 letters.] which when differently combined, can form as many sentences; also their name (A-tout) is only a literal translation of their general employment and property. 82

When the Egyptians had forgotten the first interpretation of these images, and that they had been used as simple letters for their sacred writing, 83 it was natural that such a superstitious people attached occult virtues to the characters, respected for their antiquity [Also the science of numbers and the value of letters was extremely renowned formerly.], and that the priests, who possessed the only knowledge of them, employed them solely for religious matters. (Essential Tarot Writings, Part One, "STUDY ON THE TAROTS")

OK, this makes sense, they are proto-alphabet, later added to, basically, but… why Hebrew letters as the connecting thread? "You fucking idiot, of course I combined them. 22 cards which show hieroglyphs and 22 letters of the alphabet. Fits like a glove." is what I imagine the logic ultimately boiled down to. Well, I am a touch too mean. This book predates

translation of the Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs. And most people had the Old Testament and Moses as their core Egypt exposure. As twisted as the logic is, using Hebrew letters feels like a fit, even if forced. This is my theory, at least.

The unique arrangement of his lettering is off, compared to everyone who followed, but here is where the practice started.

As much as I would like to include Etteila (Jean-Baptiste Alliette), who follows in the esoteric Tarot saga, I can't. Because he had the wonderful idea of fucking up the whole majors structure by adding nonsense to it. Brilliant, imaginative set of decks, but worthless to the essay as there is no *Priestess* to point to. Besides, his assignments are sparse - far as I can tell, some cards had astrological correspondences, but he didn't fuck with Hebrew letters.

Meeting Alphonse, or Eliphas

We move forward a few decades to Eliphas Levi, or Alphonse Louis Constant, one of the most significant names in modern esotericism. Now Eliphas Levi was REALLY curious about the idea of 22 cards and 22 Hebrew letters, because, unlike me, he was on the same psychic wavelength as Mellet. That's possibly because he knew about Qaballah, which also uses Hebrew letters, during his larger esoteric studies. Not unlike Sherlock getting inspired by Watson's insipid comments. And Eliphas is important because he is our mitochondrial Eve for every single esoteric author going forward.

He wrote about Tarot in his *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* (*The Doctrine and Ritual of High Magic*) and also *La clef des grands mystères (The Key to the Great Mysteries)*. He also goes into what the letter itself means, so I will add it to the meaning collection of *The High Priestess*. Here are his notes, from the Book of Hermes chapter of the *Rituel* (his most prominent Tarot focused chapter):

[Beth]: The house of God and man, the sanctuary, the law, gnosis, the cabal, the occult church, the binary, woman, mother
Hieroglyph of the Tarot, THE HIGH PRIESTESS: a woman crowned with a tiara, ***having the horns of the moon or of Isis****,* ***her head surrounded by a veil,*** *the solar cross on her breast, and holding on her knees a book which she hides with her cloak.*

The Protestant author of a supposed history of Pope Joan found and used, as best he could, to support his thesis, two curious and ancient figures he found of the High Priestess or High Priestess of the Tarot.

The figures give the Pope all the attributes of Isis. In one, she holds and caresses her son Horus; in the other, she has long, flowing hair, sits between the two columns of the binary, wears a four-rayed sun on her breast, places one hand on a book, and with the other makes the sign of priestly esotericism, that is, she opens only three fingers and holds the others folded as a sign of mystery; ***behind her head is the veil; and on each side of her seat is a sea upon which lotus flowers bloom.*** *I greatly pity the unfortunate scholar who saw in this ancient symbol only a monumental portrait of his supposed Pope Joan*

First mention of the Moon. But note the wording - Moon OR Isis. Keep this in mind. (Kind of funny, some Protestant pissed him off.)

Mind you this is an automatic translation of French, and I checked Waite's translation of this text just to be sure and I noticed something.

*Hieroglyph of the Tarot: THE FEMALE POPE, a woman crowned with a tiara, wearing the horns of the Moon **and** Isis, her head enveloped in a mantle, the solar cross on her breast, and holding a book*

What do you mean "**and"**? There is OU there in the original! I may not know French, I am a dumbass guy born in the 21st century and forced to learn English, but I do know how to use a dictionary! Did he try this to harmonize the text better?

Waite was infamous for shitting on Eliphas in prefaces and finding him frustrating. So much Crowley laughed at him about it in his own translation's preface of *The Key to the Great Mysteries* (Not that Al is a good source himself).

We are obliged to mention this matter, as Mr. Waite (by persistent self- assertion) has obtained the reputation of being trustworthy as an editor. On the contrary, he not only mutilates and distorts his authors, but, as demonstrated above, he is totally incapable of understanding their simplest phrases and even their commonest words.

Waite's translations were seen as the prime way to read Levi's most important works in English for decades, without people knowing he did this subtle editorializing.

In a different part of the *Rituel* (The Writing of the Stars Chapter) Levi assigns something different to *The High Priestess.* It is a section where each Tarot card somehow correlates with Christianized Moon Mansions (which is an advanced astrology concept):

Pope Joan, or Occult Science. The second day, the genius of which Enediel, was the fifth of creation, for the moon was made on the fourth day. The birds and fishes, created on this day, are living hieroglyphs of magical analogies and of the universal doctrine of Hermes. The water and air, which were filled thereby with forms of the Word, are elemen- tary figures of the Mercury of the Sages, that is, of intelligence and speech. This day is propitious to revelations, initiations and great discoveries of science.

However, check out THIS association directly under:
3. The Celestial Mother, or Empress. The third day was that of man's creation. So is the moon called the MOTHER in Kabalah, when it is represented in association with the number 3. This day is favourable to generation and generally to all productions, whether of body or mind

Interesting. And then, when our guy talks about alchemy and sources of alchemy as related to Hermeticism, in The Great Work chapter in *Rituel*, he also talks about tarot.

The kabalistic figures of Abraham the Jew, which imparted to Flamel the first desire for knowledge, are no other than the twenty-two Keys of the Tarot, imitated and resumed

elsewhere in the twelve Keys of Basil Valentine, There the sun and moon reappear under the figures of Emperor and Empress; Mercury is the Juggler; the Great Hierophant is the adept or abstractor of the quintessence; Death, Judgement, Love, the Dragon or Devil, the Hermit or Lame Elder and finally all the remaining symbols are to be found with their chief attributes, almost in the same order.

Eliphas is a guy who speaks in symbols and symbols are fluid entities. In Tarot, the Moon belongs to *The Priestess*, *beth*, the Woman. In Alchemy, it belongs to *The Empress*, the passive Mercury that combines with the active Sulfur.

And it's important that we get this across, because Eliphas focused heavily on *beth* as the woman, as the companion to *aleph*, the man. To him, this duality is paramount. Womanhood of *beth* is repeated over and over.

[Aleph] is the man [Beth] is the woman, 1 is the principle, 2 is the word, A is active, B is passive, Unity is Bohas, Binary is Jakih.
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What is man? He is the initiator, the one who breaks, plows, and sows.

What is a woman? She is the nurturer, the one who gathers, waters, and reaps.

*Man wages war, and woman brings peace; man destroys to create, woman builds to preserve; man is revolution, woman is conciliation; man is the father of Cain, woman is the mother of Abel. (*Dogme*, THE TEMPLE COLUMNS.)*

I redacted some parts because they scream misogyny and not merely as an esoteric metaphor. And I think this is what people forget sometimes - these people believed in the inferiority of women implicitly - for them it was a real belief which they found too easy to crystallise into cosmic truth. *Beth* is the cosmic first woman - this is something Eliphas digs in and in and in.

His description of the Binary (assigned to the High Priestess) in *Keys to the Mysteries* is also simply… woman. In bold capitals. Shouted. In the Christian faith. Celebration of women. Uh, Companion to Men? Eve who died after eating apples and Adam reborn as human with her, for he loved her - then enslaved by Cain and thus closing her heart she became a Virgin Mary, who gave birth to Jesus and saved us. Levi is full on Christian mysticism mode here. Madonna-Whore complex on display… literal Madonna in this case.

THE binary is more particularly the number of woman, mate of man and mother of society.
Man is love in intelligence; woman is intelligence in love.
—
Children of woman, let us forgive fallen woman!
Children of woman, let us adore regenerate woman!
Children of woman, who have slept upon her breast, been cradled in
her arms, and consoled by her caresses, let us love her, and let us
love each other! (The Key to the Great Mysteries, Article One, Solution To The First Problem.)

Egyptian initiations of Paul Christian and Papus' play with numbers

Moving on from Eliphas, finally. We go a little bit further in history to meet with a guy called Paul Christian, birth name Jean-Baptiste Pitois (yes, most of them took on alternate names). He belongs to the story of Tarot with his tract called *History of Magic,* where Tarot is mentioned as a part of an initiation into Egyptian mysteries. Paul is interesting, he has very very few facts and conveys the majority of them with elaborate storytelling. The initiate was forced to crawl through a thin passage and then get on a ladder which ended with a drop to a hole. And only when he lost almost all hope he noticed a gap in the wall and a way to get to it. Once there he was allowed to witness the 22 massive golden hieroglyphs that he may commit to memory to learn all the mysteries of the universe.

So.. what did Christian proclaim about our *Poppess*? What does she teach?

It expresses, in the Divine World, the consciousness of the Absolute Being which embraces the three terms of all manifestation: past, present, future. In the Intellectual World, the Binary, reflection of Unity, Science, perception of visible and invisible things. In the Physical World, Woman, mold of Man, and uniting with him to fulfill an equal destiny.

*The Major Arcana II is depicted by a woman seated at the threshold of the temple of Isis, between two columns. The column that rises to her right is red; this color signifies the spirit and its luminous ascension above matter The left column is black, representing the night of chaos, the captivity of the impure spirit in the bonds of matte****r. The woman is crowned with a tiara surmounted by the crescent moon, and enveloped in a veil whose folds fall over her face****. She wears the solar cross on her breast, and on her knees an open book, half-covered by her mantle. This symbolic ensemble personifies the Occult Science that awaits the initiate at the sanctuary of Isis.The solar cross (analogous to the Indian Lingam (1)) signifies the fertilization of matter by spirit; it also expresses, as a seal of infinity, that science proceeds from God, and that it is boundless like its source. The enveloping veil falling over her face signifies that truth eludes the gaze of profane curiosity. The book half-hidden under her cloak signifies that mysteries reveal themselves only in solitude, to the wise man who gathers himself in silence, in full and calm self-possession. (Book Two, Mysteries of the Pyramids)*

I just want to point out the corruption from the horned tiara of Gebelin to now explicitly the lunar tiara. (There is more text but it would be too much to add.)

Later, in the Volume Two General theory of Horoscope section, he also adds:
The Moon *(Arcanum II; Door of the Sanctuary)*

Creating yet another Moon - Beth - *High Priestess* loop.

A small diversion into more French people, even if we have a ticket to England now and we are clamoring to see Golden Dawn. There is Papus*,* real name Gerard Encausse, a VERY influential French esotericist, who created Martinist lodges in France and inspired others abroad. His work is interesting, as he just creates his own system by creating a nested loop of 4s, which is very hard to explain, but is based on the The Unpronounceable Name of God,

or Tetragrammaton. Pronouncing names of God was seen as a powerful magical spell, something inherited from Renaissance magic. Nonetheless, a minor, but important layer is his connection of Letters and Astrology through the same method that Christian very likely used - I will elaborate on this later. Huge fan of Eliphas Levi too. Papus also assigned High Priestess to Moon and to *beth:*

Beth corresponds with the number 2, and astronomically with the moon. This number has given birth to all the passive significations emanated from the Binary, hence the ideas of reflection, of Woman : applied to the Moon relatively to the Sun, and to Woman relatively to Man. God himself, or God the Father, reflects himself, and gives birth to God the Man, or God the Son, the negative relative to his creator. As we have seen, man is the divine receiver, therefore this second card of the Tarot will express all the ideas of the first conceived negatively.

The first card represents a man standing; this, on the contrary, bears the figure of a seated woman.

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The woman ***is crowned with a tiara, surmounted by the lunar crescent, she is enveloped in a transparent veil falling»; over her face****. On her breast she bears the solar cross, and upon her knees lies an open book, which she half covers with her mantle.*

This is the picture of Isis, of Nature, whose veil must not be raised before the profane. The book indicates that the doctrines of Isis are hidden ; but she divulges to the magi the secrets of the true Kabbalah, and of occult science. We must admire this profound symbol. (The tarot of the Bohemians, Chapter X)

Notably, Papus smooths out the contradiction of the first card not being Sun in absolutely any single visual way by simply not commenting on it. He also decouples gender from the consideration later on, but it's OK, because it's still Isis - Nature and that's wife of Osiris, and she… comes from him in some sort of biblical way, so it clearly follows,doesn't it? Thank god they had a convenient woman as a second card, this would be awkward otherwise.

The first card expressed Osiris in the three worlds ; this second gives us the signification of Isis, the companion of Osiris —
In God it is the reflex of Osiris, the reflex of God the Father, Isis, or God the Son.
In Man it is the reflex of Adam of the absolute man : Eve, the woman, life.
In the Universe it is the reflex of natura naturans : it is natura naturata.

And that's all the most important French opinions on the High Priestess. Mostly just a wife and a woman and some secret shit and also Moon!

Familiar Waters of Golden Dawn

Finally, we are in England. So, Golden Dawn. Two men, William Wynn Westcott and Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers, previously engaged in other mystery lodges, claimed to have found a Cipher Manuscript full of info about esoteric secrets and a letter from a living

German initiate to confirm it! Wow what a coincidence! A year later, in 1888, they, plus another member of Rosencruzian society named Woodman (he died almost instantly after), opened their famous Temple, and the rest is history. We have the assignments. They are all over the internet, in every respectable guidebook on the Waite-Smith tarot. Guys in 1909 knew as well, because Alesteir Crowley leaked the correspondence tables in Liber 777, then in his Order's magazine. We also now have access to SOME documents of the Order.

Westcott wrote one thing on Tarot in 1887. It is one part of his massive monograph on the silly Isaiac tablet. It's an illustrative tablet that esotericists went mad about - then it got properly translated and turned out to be a Roman kitsch. And yet, many people still kept going about its esoteric significance. Reflection of Roman Egyptomania in the Victorian Egyptomaniacs!

And Westcott references Gebelin too, with the enforced faux-Egyptian names of the Majors!

5. The Hierophant, Pope. 16. House of Plutus, Babel. 7. The Conqueror in a Chariot, Osiris

And interestingly, on our High Priestess he has this to say:

2. Beth. Woman, Sanctuary

But wait, aren't those just Levi's notes? He does quote him all over as the source on the tablet, so, makes sense, but still, nothing original to say?

Tarot curriculum was always to be part of the Golden Dawn, we can see it in the Manuscript these two got. Mathers wrote and published a small cute Pamphlet called *Tarot* in 1888 and it says this:

The High Priestess, or Female Pope. A woman crowned with a high mitre or tiara (her head encircled by a veil), a stole (or a solar cross) upon her breast, and the Book of Science open in her hand. She represents Science, Wisdom, or Knowledge.

Meaning: Science, Wisdom, Knowledge, Education; R. Conceit, Ignorance, Unskilfulness, Superficial Knowledge.

Oh hey, someone who doesn't recreate the idea of the past-Gebelín that slowly shifts it into Lunar territory. Wonders never cease. Our boys know what *mitre* is and that it isn't some mystical Isis/moon crown.

However this tract was unrelated to what was actually taught.
Book T was a tract also distributed to Adepts, worked on by Mathers and another guy Robert William Felkin. It's also most of what Crowley leaked in that one magazine entry. It says:

*The Priestess of the Silver Star - **Gimel** - Moon*
Divinatory meaning: Skill, wisdom, adaptation, craft, cunning, or occult wisdom or power. (Book T)

So here we can feel a bit of dissonance, right? We changed the letter completely (it had to move, remember, *Fool* was put from the very back to the front) and yet, somehow, the assignment to the Moon is the same. This is the point of madness that kickstarted this whole endeavour. (Mind you Book T is only good at a certain Initiate level, with more info on Majors in the later levels of Adepts.)

Somewhere, in 1888, or perhaps earlier, Westcott and Mathers redesigned the Arcana by moving *The Fool*. However, Mathers, for reasons utterly alien to me, kept to the Levi assignment like a good boy in his small pamphlet. Hinting gently on deeper esoteric uses.

Space does not allow me to enter further into the subject, on which, indeed, several volumes might be written without exhausting it. I can only hope that this short treatise will suffice to give my readers some idea of the recondite meaning of the Tarot Cards, and how to employ them in divination.

Mind you, at this point he and Westcott were working on opening the first temple. It is possible he was baiting people into his soon to be opened Order, not unlike ARGs used to promote products nowadays. And as a note, eventually, they developed their own occult tarot, not like Etteila's fortune-telling focused tarot. Theirs tried to legitimately be occult and contain explicitly esoteric correspondences and ideas. This Golden Dawn deck would later become the inspiration for both the Thoth deck of Crowley-Harris deck and Waite-Smith deck. Most sources corroborate the fact that at a certain point, the Initiates of the Order had to paint their own decks, to ascend the hierarchy.

An Introduction to the Hebrew Letter Associations

That concludes our brief look at all the writers in the period we are interested in. There are other writers with their own decks, but they are not as influential. So let's not add more complications to this list, even if their own takes on astrological correspondences baffle me even more.

	De Mellet 1773-1782	Levi 1856	Christian 1860	Papus 1889	Westcott 1887	Mathers 1888	Golden Dawn/ Wait
The Letter	Resh	Beth	Beth	Beth	Beth	Beth	Gimel
Astrology correspondence	—	—	Moon	Moon	Moon	—	Moon

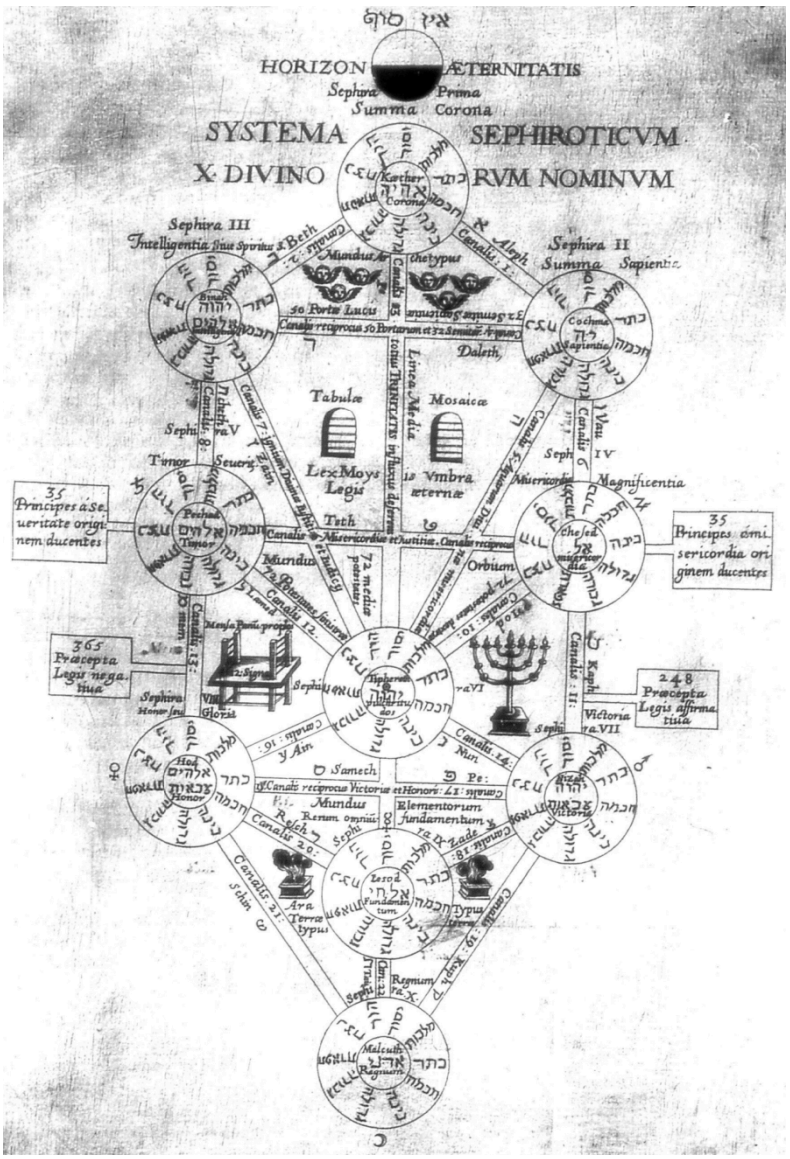
And just like we have all this correspondence building up into a nice pile. Now, what document does the hard work of connecting these two layers - astrology and Hebrew lettering?

Well, it's called Sefer *Yetzirah.* One of the oldest texts we have belongs to the school of Jewish mysticism. Dating is inconsistent but scholarly agreement lies somewhere between

3rd - 10th century AD. Christian thinkers encountered it during the Renaissance and absorbed it into Christian Cabalah and magic grimoires. This would later become Hermetic, or Occult Qaballah. Westcott , Eliphas and Papus call *Sefer Yetzirah* explicitly in their works.

Sefer Yetzirah is a rather short Hebrew text, deeply poetic. The main focus is on the creation of letters by God, and how he used them to further create the world. 3 letters are mother letters, because they represent the core elements of fire, air and water used to fashion all others, 7 are dual because of the possibility of two pronunciations, and 12 are simple letters. Mother letters are usually assigned elements, as we said, dual letters planets and simple letters the zodiac signs. It's a mystical document that to Christian mind can evoke the phrase "In the beginning was a word", which was one of the reasons Christians jumped on it like "Holy moly, we can take this!"

It also contains an account of the so-called Sefirot (Emanations is one translation) - the actual matrix through which God interacts with the world. There are ten of them and If you arrange the 10 Sefirot into three columns, and put paths between them, you get the now very famous Tree of Life imagery. Below is such an image with paths marked as well. (Source: *Oedipi Aegyptiaci by Athanasius Kircher* hey that's also the guy from the Isiac Table huh. weird*)*



The ten Sefirot are below:

1. *Keter*, the Divine Crown
2. *Hokhmah*, Wisdom
3. *Binah*, Understanding
4. *Hesed*, Mercy
5. *Din*, Justice
6. *Tif'eret*, Beauty
7. *Nezah*, Eternity
8. *Hod*, Glory
9. *Yesod*, Foundation
10. *Shekhinah*, God's Presence in the World

(Source: Jewishvirtuallibrary - Mind you, this is just one interpretation and there is more traditions)

Some of them are transliterated differently in the Anglosphere because they were thrust into public knowledge through esoteric, rather than Jewish sources. The descriptive word for their essence is also translated differently, on occasion.

1. *Kether*, the Crown.
2. *Chokmah*, Wisdom
3. *Binah*, Understanding
4. *Chesed*, Mercy or Love or *Gedulah*, Greatness or Magnificence
5. *Geburah*, strength or fortitude; or DIN, *Deen*, Justice
6. *Tiphareth*, Beauty or Mildness
7. *Netzach*, or Firmness and Victory
8. *Hod*, Splendour
9. *Yesod*, the Foundation or Basis
10. *Malkuth*, the Kingdom

(Source: https://hermeticgoldendawn.org)

A lot of material here became a cornerstone of Western esoteric thought. This manuscript has issues, however, which is to say it's not singular but plural. Manuscripts. There are many versions, some differing significantly and then elaborated on in many ways through specific commentaries. The association between letters and astrology isn't always clear, for example! Even the shape of the Tree of Life or the idea of paths marked by the letters is explored differently by different people! (Mind you, many of these ideas did exist in commentaries, or in different forms over many traditions and writers.)

Tetragrammaton is also worth mentioning here - YHWH was a recurring magical element in esoteric works. A big part of Kabbalah is working with and analysing letters, working with their number correspondences, finding hidden meanings in text through these layers. Knowing the literal name of God, and speaking it correctly, was understood as a source of magical power. Trying to pronounce it outside of its sacred context is considered taboo in Jewish faith - one can argue that esotericists were wildly misunderstanding and exploiting something they didn't understand. Explanation of the origin of this practice and its likely significance can be found on the https://jewishencyclopedia.com website. YHWH is just one of many names associated with God and a lot of ink was spilled over the many Divine names - they too were seen as their own "spells" by magicians. Deep analysis of Tetragrammaton's constituent letters - *yod, heh, vau, second heh* - appear in both Jewish sources and derivative practices.

And here it's important to clarify my view on the matter - the Christians were absolutely engaged in cultural appropriation from a culture and people they oppressed heavily. Hell the tree image above, I used because it served as a framework for Golden Dawn, but it is many stages removed from Jewish conceptions. Esoteric Qaballah is one more link in the chain of telephone games. Judaism is still practised today and study of Kabbalah is a restricted, observant Jewish practice. Some Jewish people heavily protest this appropriation - others are fine with sharing and discussing material.
I am not Jewish, nor am I an expert. I am someone who is trying to see what these esotericists are thinking. As such I apologise for the simplistic explanation focused on explaining esoteric Qabbalah.

For my comparisons with known versions of *Sefer Yetzirah* I've consulted a book called *Sefer Yetzirah: The Book of Creation in Theory and Practice* by Aryeh Kaplan. It's an incredibly fine work of scholarship. It claims:

If all the variants found in manuscripts are counted, there are literally dozens of different variants in the text of Sefer Yetzirah. No other Judaic text exists in so many versions. Some of these might have come from different schools, who, because these teachings were secret, did not communicate with each other. Different marginal notes and commentaries also apparently became incorporated into the text, producing different variants. Furthermore, if the text was preserved orally for a long time, variants in its ordering may have also developed. (Texts and Commentary)

Interrogating the French - Christian and Papus

Well, which of the versions we use to judge our authors? Which one did they use? Is this problem of different associations simply a case of using different manuscripts? In the curious writings of Christian Payne-Towler, I came across the mention of the GRA version as the one which has been referred to by the French and Spanish authors. Indeed it is also the version that Kaplan used as the base for his commentary in his book. The GRA version (created by *Rabbi Eliahu, Gaon of Vilna*) is the third in the generation of attempts to somehow centralize the text. To quote Kaplan:

Around 1550, Rabbi Moshe Cordevero, leader of the Safed school and the greatest Kabbalist of the day, sifted through the ten best manuscripts available, choosing the one most closely fitting the tradition of the Kabbalists.119 A generation later, the text was further refined by the Ari (Rabbi Yitzchak Luria), one of the greatest Kabbalists of all time. This text, known as the Ari Version, was published a number of times, usually as part of some other collection. It resembles the Short Version in many ways, but there are some very significant differences in assignment. In general, the Ari Version is the only one which is in agreement with the Zohar.

A number of variations were found even in this version, and a final edited text was finally produced by the Gra (Rabbi Eliahu. Gaon of Vilna) in the 18th century.120 This is known as the Gra-Ari Version, or simply, as the Gra Version. (Texts and Commentary)

It is also the only version, of those compared by Kaplan, to note *beth* as corresponding to the Moon, with the more common reading being Saturn by a huge margin. (*Commentary on Chapter 4, verse 14*)

Were Christian and Papus following a different version in their attribution, or did they also choose GRA? To explore that, I need to explain HOW *Sefer Yetzirah* does the hard work of assigning planets. And the answer is simply that not all versions do it. Double letters, those assigned planets, are usually covered in Chapter IV. In some versions we see the following verse at the end of the chapter:

And therefore he chose the seventh under heaven. Two stones build two houses: Three build six: Four seven hundred and twenty-seven: Five thousand and forty: And from this the

number progresses into an indescribable and unheard of: and these are the stars in the World, the ***Sun, Venus, Mercury, Moon, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars:*** *And these are the days in the year, the seven days of creation: and these are the gates in man, namely two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and a mouth. (*Pistorius' *Ars Cabbalistica)*

Even mentioning the planets by name is, once again, dependent on the version. However, their order in this verse is sometimes seen as explicit assignment, in the order of the double letters in the alphabet.

Some versions do have more verses at the end Chapter 4 which explicitly bind the letter and planet:

*He made the letter Bet (*ב*) king over Wisdom/ And He bound a crown to it/ And He combined one with another/ And with them He formed/ The Moon in the Universe/ Sunday in the Year/ The right eye in the Soul,/ male and female.*

(one paragraph for every double letter) (Sefer Yetzirah GRA version hosted on sefaria.org)

Papus has his own French translation of SY. Maybe his attributions in *Tarot of Bohemians* and his translations were separate projects. Unfortunately, finding the actual work released in 1887 is a Sisiphean task. Papus claims that it existed, that he translated it in 1887. However, the earliest source I can get is 1892 *La Kabbale : (tradition secrète de l'occident).* It's a collection of various works by many authors on the Kabbalistic topics.

All the scientific, philosophical, or religious data of Kabbalah are taken from two fundamental books, the Zohar and the Sefer Yetzirah. The first of these books is very voluminous. It is translated into Latin in the Kabbala Denudata and into English in the Kabbala Unveiled by M. A. Matthers. We enclose the translation of the second of these works as we published it in 1887 with commentaries and notes. (La Kaballe 1892, Chapter VII, The Texts)

I am going to cautiously take it at its word. Papus begs for our understanding in his translation:

I ask the reader to forgive in advance any errors that may have crept into my work, to which I have added a bibliography allowing the researcher to consult the originals, and remarks that clarify, as far as possible, the most obscure passages of the text.

I won't be nice. This translation doesn't really have the same attributions as his *Tarot of Bohemians* released in 1889. Because there are no verses assigning planets explicitly, there is only that verse containing orders of planets. If we take that as the assignment, *beth* should be Sun There is more commentary in the 1903 version and he starts it like this:

The first, in France, we produced a translation with commentary of the Sefer Ietzirah , or Kabbalistic Book of Creation.
This translation was based on the texts we possessed at the time, which were incomplete.
Later, Mr. Mayer-Lambert, professor at the Rabbinical Seminary, produced a new translation, based on more complete Hebrew and Arabic manuscripts.

(La Cabbale : tradition secrète de l'Occident. 1903, Le Sepher Ietzirah, Attempt To Reconstruct The Text)

In this one, he pulls from Mayer Lambert to “unite” the texts (in fact, very likely, two separate versions), and get *beth* - Saturn, since Mayer Lambert HAD the version with the assignment verses. My question is, if he knew that *beth* is not Moon in his *Sefer Yetzirath,* why did he overwhelmingly trust Christian in *Tarot of the Bohemians*? Mind you, the translation is cited in that book, so it predates it.

For our continuous discussion of what the fuck happened, we need at least one more card to build some sort of history and get more data points. I chose *The Empress*, because well, it’s the next card, and honestly shares some problems with *The High Priestess*. I thought fine, this will point me in some direction and let me find one text as an anchor.

	De Mellet 1773-1782	Levi 1856	Christian 1860	Papus 1889	Westcott 1887	Mathers 1888	Golden Dawn/ Thelema
The Letter	*qoph*	*gimel*	*gimel*	*gimel*	*ghimel*	*daleth*	*daleth*
Astrology correspondence	—	—	Venus	Venus	Mars	—	Venus

According to Kaplan, *gimel* corresponds to Jupiter, Mars (GRA only) and Sun. None of them, except Westcott, is even close to the correspondence we got. I can’t even logic myself to Venus, no matter how I twist the correspondences.

I am shocked, frankly! I thought I would come in here and say hey, one of you is wrong, which one is it? Why? Turns out they were all wrong! Now we have to contend with a question - what were they fucking thinking when assigning astrology and letters together?

Clearly our dear friend Christian is here to blame! He’s the first to combine them! Papus calls him out as inspiration!

We shall now study the Hebrew letters one by one, in determining successively —

1st. The hieroglyphic value of each one of them according to its origin (Fabre d'Olivet, Barrois) ;

2nd. Its symbolic value derived from this hieroglyphic (Fabre d'Olivet, Eliphas Levi, Christian)

3rd. Its astronomical value (Christian and the Sepher Yetzirah). (The Tarot of the Bohemians, Chapter IX., History Of The Symbolism Of The Tarot.)

Let’s circle back to Christian’s explanations, specifically in the very short brief where he assigned cards to the astrological concepts in his Horoscope section. In his test horoscope

reading on Napoleon, he makes use of his technique to combine tarot meanings with astrology in a surprisingly coherent system. However I can't figure out his method, as my astrology is weak, beyond basic theory. However I can read the Tarot associations, which were points of transmission for at least one other guy. Before that, here is his comment on why we are using Hebrew letters and Tarot cards with astrology, according to Christian:

The mystical theory of these occult powers would require long commentaries that would tire the reader. I must limit myself here to a practical demonstration, offering an amusing study which, although I know not what secret virtue, anterior and superior to all philosophy, sometimes rises to the level of the great prophecies of antiquity."

A classic dodge to make oneself look more mysterious.

The Empress made it seem dour, but let's give the guy a benefit of the doubt and actually compare his associations and GRA version of SY.

I - The Magician	ALEPH - AIR
II - The Moon (Door of the Sanctuary)	BETH - MOON
III - Venus (Isis-Urania)	GIMEL - MARS
IV - Jupiter (The Cubic Stone)	DALETH - SUN
V - The Master of Mysteries - Aries	HEH - ARIES
VI - The Two Routes - Taurus	VAU - TAURUS
VII - The Chariot of Osiris - Gemini	ZAIN - GEMINI
VIII - The Balance and the Sword - Cancer	CHETH - CANCER
IX - The Veiled Lamp - Leo	TETH - LION
X - The Sphinx - Virgo	YOD - VIRGO
XI - Mars (The Tamed Lion)	KAPH - VENUS
XII - The Sacrifice - Libra	LAMED - LIBRA
XIII - The Reaper	MEM - WATER
XIV - The Solar Genius - Scorpio	NUCH - SCORPIO
XV - Typhon - Sagittarius	SAMECH - SAGITTARIUS
XVI - The Struck Tower - Capricorn	OIN - CAPRICORN
XVII - Mercury (The Star of the Mages)	PE - MERCURY
XVIII - The Twilight - Aquarius	TZADDI - AQUARIUS
XIX - The Resplendent Light - Pisces	SOPH - PISCES

XX - Saturn (The Genius of the Dead)	RESH - SATURN
0 - The Crocodile	SHIN - FIRE
XXI - The Sun (The Crown of the Mages)	TAU - JUPITER

Hey wait a fucking minute! Everything checks out… except for two weird switches!

The Empress was switched from Mars to Venus! And then *The Emperor* for Jupiter! Now I fully feel like…. *Empress* makes sense. No martial qualities, slap it on *Strength* instead, but the *The Emperor - The World* switch is weird! And again I don't know why he did it, cause I don't know why he created these correspondences!

But this inspired Papus, as the man himself admitted. His astrological assignments are the same too. But he says something weird!

But we are more surprised to find that the Sepher Yetzirah,6 an old book of the Kabbalah, which contains a study upon the formation of the Hebrew alphabet, arrives at a division of ***the letters which exactly corresponds within the astrological data contained in an old manuscript in the Vatican, upon which Christian 1 based his horoscopic works .*** *(The Tarot of Bohemians, History Of The Symbolism Of The Tarot)*
///
Now in studying the astrological manuscript published by Christian, we have discovered that the numbers attributed to ***the planets by the author of this manuscript*** *exactly correspond with the double Hebrew letters. The numbers attributed to the twelve signs of the zodiac exactly correspond with the simple letters.*

We considered that this absolute agreement between two documents of such different origin deserved our serious attention, and we have therefore given with each letter its astronomical correspondence.
(The Tarot of Bohemians, The Symbolic Tarot)

WHAT fucking Vatican manuscript???

Well, Christian wrote a book before his *History and Practice of Magic*. Its title is *L'homme rouge des Tuileries.* It's a weird fucking book, only in French, with almost no information available online. This doesn't exactly aid my understanding. Some people say it's just fiction, and a lot of it seems like narrative - however at times it works like an honest-to-god astrology manual! I needed to understand and so I picked up this book I didn't even think I'd need to read. I'll give a quick summary of chapters that lead to our mysterious Vatican paper.

A scholarly dude called Guyon Bonaventure is studying a lot of shit at the turn of the 19th century. Shit sucks, it's-post Revolution after all. He is old, can't afford food, so he starts telling fortunes. A guy comes by, and it's Napoleon. They discuss math and fortune telling. Napoleon asks DUDE WHERE DID YOU GET THIS KNOWLEDGE? And so Guyon spins a tale of some Bishop called Rohan visiting a church on a secret mission to talk with Prior Lagny. Prior and his friend were making predictions about the King dying and so Rohan is

like hey what's all that about? Prior answered that, well, he got a cool papyrus from the Vatican (uh-oh):

It was covered, internally, with a Hebrew text interspersed with Egyptian words and a multitude of hieroglyphs. This volume was an antiquary discovered in the attic of the Vatican, and the Holy Father, Clement XIV, who apparently lacks the gift of tongues, although he bestows upon us the Holy Spirit, had the Abbot General of our order ask me to examine its contents, since the sworn interpreters of the Sacred College could not understand a thing. I hastened to obey. This volume, which it was not possible to decipher as easily as the Bishop of Senlis, my Orientalist mentor, would have done, was entitled, in French translation: THE GATES OF HERMES, OPENED BY RABBI SIMEON BAR-JOCHAI OF ALEXANDRIA.(L'homme rouge des Tuileries, Chapter IX)

Oh no.

Wrapped in this fictional narrative, like a hot dog sausage in a bun, rests *Manuscript Of Master Guyon, Fragments Of A Lost Book*. And this is actual astrology theory, if laundered through Egyptomania and Levi. It also contains descriptions of The Major cards, but this is almost exactly the content from *History and Practice of Magic* so I really don't care to repeat it here (in fact, a lot of stuff here got recycled in his latter book).

Mind you, this … work blends legit methods with fiction, and then *History and Practice of Magic* claims to be well, History. So…Papus likely took a statement from the fictional part of this hybrid and was like, d'uh of course a manuscript from the Vatican. I have a new source! How did this happen? I will say the fictional part is a good read, even translated it has a lot of charm, I just wish Christian stuck to fiction.

Also, Rabbi Simeon Bar-Jochai… was not from Alexandria. He was born in Galilee and has lived in Palestine all his life. So, we are dealing with the forced kissing of Hermeticism and Jewish historical figures.

Papus even gives completely different Wirth-derived assignments in his *Tarot of Bohemians* and just doesn't consider the implications! Oswald Wirth assigned astrological correspondences based on imagery of the card, and in his 1928 book he directly says "yea I think *Sefer Yetzirah* is not at the core of the Tarot".

What the fuck is the actual source here? Excuse my skepticism regarding the Vatican papyrus, but I just don't believe it!

The Original Sin of Eliphas Levi

So at this point I was like, wait, did I miss something with Levi? And sure fucking enough, in his *The Key to the Great Mysteries*, the book I only glanced at first, because it feels mythical and poetical in the bits I've read. But, it is indeed, my own Vatican papyrus:

Beth: Reflection, thought, the moon, the angel Gabriel, prince of mysteries;
Ghimel: Love, will, Venus, the angel Anael, prince of life and death;

Daleth: Strength, power, Jupiter, Sachiel Melech, king of kings;
Caph: Violence, struggle, work Mars, Samael Zebaoth, prince of the phalanxes
Phe: Eloquence, intelligence, Mercury, Raphael, prince of sciences
Resch: Destruction and regeneration, Time, Saturn, Cassiel, king of tombs and solitudes
Tau: Truth, light, the Sun, Michael, king of the Elohim.
(Part 3, Book 1 - Mysteries of Magnetism, Chapter 3 - Mysteries of Hallucinations and the Evocation of Spirits. All of the further quotes in this mini-chapter come from here, unless stated otherwise)

This book gives the GRA-but-not-quite associations that Papus and Christian both followed!

So….. what the hell was he doing here? Is this a double blind, to make sure his students read? Is this another esoteric cover of real facts? After all, he didn't mention the elements, or the zodiac! Is everyone fucking pranking me?

But maybe there is a method for this madness. For the purposes of this, I need to reproduce the whole section of *The Key* here, apologies for the lengthy citations.

The Word, or speech, being, according to initiates of this science, the entirety of revelation, the principles of the higher Kabbalah must be found contained within the very signs that compose the primitive alphabet. Now, here is what we find in all Hebrew grammars.

There is a fundamental and universal letter that generates all others. It is the letter yod. There are two other mother letters, opposite and analogous to each other: the letter aleph k and the letter mem d, according to others the letter schin .

Each combination of letters represents a series of numbers. The numbers represent absolute philosophical ideas. The letters are abbreviated hieroglyphs. Let us now examine the hieroglyphic and philosophical meanings of each of the twenty-two letters. ***(See Bellarmine, Reuchlin, Saint Jerome, Kabbala Denudata, the Sefer Jezirah, Father Schott's Technica Curiosa, Pico della Mirandola, and other authors, especially those in the Pistorius Collection.)***

There are seven double letters: the aleph, the ghim, the daleth, the khach, the phech, the resh, and the tau.

Finally, there are twelve single letters, which are the other letters; in all, twenty-two.

Unity is represented relatively by the aleph; the ternary is represented either by the yod, the mem, the shin, or by the aleph, the mem, the shin.

The septenary by the beth, gimel, daleth, caph, phe, resch and tau.The duodenal by the other letters. The duodenal is the ternary multiplied by four; and it thus falls within the symbolism of the septenary. Each letter represents a number:

The ghim—The absolute principle, the productive being; The mem—The spirit, or the Jachin of Solomon; The Schin. —Matter, or the Bohas column.

(repeat of the previously quoted section)

The Simple. The simple letters are divided into four ternaries, each bearing the four letters of the divine tetragrammaton as its title. In the divine tetragrammaton, the yod, as we have just stated, represents the active productive principle. — The heh represents the passive productive principle, the cteïs. — The vau represents the union of the two, or the lingam. And the final heh is the image of the secondary productive principle, that is, the passive reproduction in the world of effects and forms. The twelve simple letters, divided into groups of three, reproduce the concept of the primordial triangle, with the interpretation and under the influence of each of the letters of the tetragrammaton. It is clear that the philosophy and religious dogma of Kabbalah are indicated here in a complete but veiled manner.

So, this isn't *Sefer Yetzirah*. If we look at any translation, those are not features applied to SY planet attributions. It's a very hollow shell of it. For starters, the whole point of double letters is their dual nature and that they show two sides of one concept.

Seven Doubles: BGD KPRT (בגד כפרת)/ Their foundation is/ Wisdom, Wealth, Seed,/ Life, Dominance, Peace and Grace.

Seven Doubles: BGD KPRT (בגד כפרת)/ in speech and in transposition./ The transpose of Wisdom is Folly/ The transpose of Wealth is Poverty/ The transpose of Seed is Desolation/ The transpose of Life is Death/ The transpose of Dominance is Subjugation/ The transpose of Peace is War/ The transpose of Grace is Ugliness
(Sefaria.com GRA version)

Not only do we see no hint of duality here, we also don't see elements applied to mother letters OR zodiac assigned to simple letters. Well, sometimes Sefirot also gets the planetary attributions, and archangel associations, so maybe it's related to that? But which ones is he assigning planets to and in what matter? (You have 7 planets and 10 Sefirot) And how does it translate to the letters here, other than vague order?

Again, the elements are usually in order and applied to three explicitly called out mother letters. Zodiac signs also go in specific order, because they mark the progression through the year. This makes most of the template of letters over cards hardcoded. Planets are the problem here and they are the unique fingerprints of the system.

Archangels won't help us out much, as this specific planet - archangel correspondence can be found in *many* grimoires. (For anyone curious here is the assignment comparison of common grimoires and explanations: https://www.esotericarchives.com/solomon/heptamer.htm) As for the meanings, they correspond fairly well to the planets.

But wait, what the fuck is up with applying *yod* to mothers? It's categorically a simple letter! What was he doing? It's almost like he is mistaking its meaning in Tetragrammaton, where it is the first letter, *for* the fact that it's a mother letter - even though that's just not what they even are as a category! He doesn't even associate them with elements, but with vague spirit-matter concepts! He defends the *yod* thing with:

There is a main and universal letter generating all the others. It's the iod.

But that doesn't make it a mother letter! It's one reading based on interpreting the unpronounceable name of God and its first letter! You are working in one specific tradition and you are ripping it apart and playing with it like it's a tool, its categories worthless, it's boundaries defined by just anything! Can this guy fucking read??? THREE translations of *Sefer Yetzirah* at your fingertips!

Finally, there are twelve simples which are the other letters; in total, twenty-two.

No, because you ripped out the *yod* and put it into mothers- and then in the summary of meanings you just slid it back into simples like nothing happened. It can't do triple duty! "According to others it's either *mem* or *shin".* Now, he literally assigned *shin* to the Fool, who he sees as the corrupted folly of a man! I think that's possibly why he kicked out *shin!* But this is me *ad-hoc* adding my interpretations and trying to work through the logic of this whole ordeal. It's possibly more likely he wanted to uphold *yod* as a generative principle.

Let's now question the allegories of Genesis. «In principle (iod, the unity of being), /Eloim, the balanced forces (Jakin and Bohas) made heaven (spirit) and earth (matter), in other words good and evil, affirmation and negation.» This is how the story of Moses begins.

Where did he GET THIS?

This is a system followed by the entire French Occult school as well, did noone stop and think about this? How Papus made a system out of this is anyone's guess. (Hey, he received a papyrus scroll with a french kiss from Paul Christian so maybe he didn't have to!)

In a bit of misdirection, he goes on to ramble about some "stupid" secular historian, who only sees the 7 planets and 12 zodiacs but not the correspondences/metaphors applied to them.

What Dupuis lacked to understand the universal religious dogma of Kabbalah was the science of that beautiful hypothesis, partially demonstrated and increasingly realized daily by scientific discoveries: universal analogy. Deprived of this key to the transcendental dogma, he could only see in all the gods the sun, the seven planets, and the twelve signs of the zodiac, but he did not see in the sun the image of Plato's logos, in the seven planets the seven notes of the celestial scale, and in the zodiac the quadrature of the ternary cycle of all initiations.

I think these two things, so close together, made his followers focus on *Sefer Yetzirah* as the main source of correspondences and ignore the fact his own attribution system is a wretched beast of abomination.

Interrogating Writings of Eliphas

But is it? I feel I've been so gaslit by the esoteric writers by now, I also felt a bit like "Wait, was he trolling? Being a goofy guy here?" After all, his last sentence in the section says that the philosophy is veiled. And Crowley writes this note in the translation:

<<This is all deliberately wrong. That Levi knew the correct attributions is evident from a M.S. annotated by himself. Levi refused to reveal these attributions, rightly enough, as his grade was not high enough, and the time is not ripe. Note the subtlety of the form of his statement. The correct attributions are in Liber 777. --- O. M.>>

Now Crowley is jerking off his own attributions and the size of his grade here, a classic case of esoteric ideas 101, but it did make me feel doubtful. After all, I discovered this after I was done with *The Key to the Great Mysteries*. What's to say Eliphas didn't write more?

First, let's return to *Dogma and Ritual of Magi*c, which, before I even suspected the hell I would condemn myself to, I only lightly skimmed.

These ten primary concepts, attached to the first ten characters of the primitive alphabet, signifying both principles and numbers, are what the masters of Kabbalah call the ten Sephiroth.
///
With the help of this purely dogmatic explanation, one can already understand the figures of the cabalistic alphabet of the Tarot. Thus, figure number 1, called the Magician, represents the active principle in the unity of divine and human self-creation; number 2, commonly called the High Priestess, represents dogmatic unity founded on numbers, it is the Kabbalah or Gnosis personified; number 3 represents divine Spirituality under the emblem of a winged woman who holds in one hand the apocalyptic eagle, and, in the other, the world suspended from the end of her scepter. The other figures are as clear and as easily explained as these first ones. (Dogma, Chapter 10 - The Kabbalah)[Fuck you - me]

This suggests to me that he connected letters to Sefirot and generated a planetary correspondence from that. However, based on this passage, he should just assign the first ten letters to ten Sefirot and call it a day. Not all double letters are contained in that part of the alphabet. This is a false lead for our search, a Fool's gold. But it may yet be of worth. Levi's thinking is so twisted that it beggars belief - in absence of anything else it remains at least an entertaining theory.

So, to theorize: he read *Sefer Yetzirath* and basically just forced mothers and doubles (plus *the* smuggled in *yod*) to stand for Sefirot. Levi has a simple first 10 letter scheme for his Sefirot application. He reads SY and gets to sneak in a different kind of 10. The first three get the mother letters, and thank god I don't need them for my argument, because I am not untangling *that.* This is where he could have forced *yod* to be a mother letter, because it corresponds to *Kether* meaning-wise, to him. These three are seen as separate, and sometimes called supernary, by the way. The next step would be giving doubles to the lower Sefirot. And this is where my theory hits a massive snag, cause I don't have a clue how he applied double letters to them. I try order, reverse order, Ptolemaic order (basically works on how fast the planet moves), reverse Ptolemaic order, loosely apply features he gave them, etc. Nothing hits. Nothing follows. Another wall. We turn around and seek a different way out of the labyrinth. Is there even an exit?
Another dagger is that the meaning of the double letters in *The Key* are unrelated to the Sefirot, and seem derived purely from the planetary features.

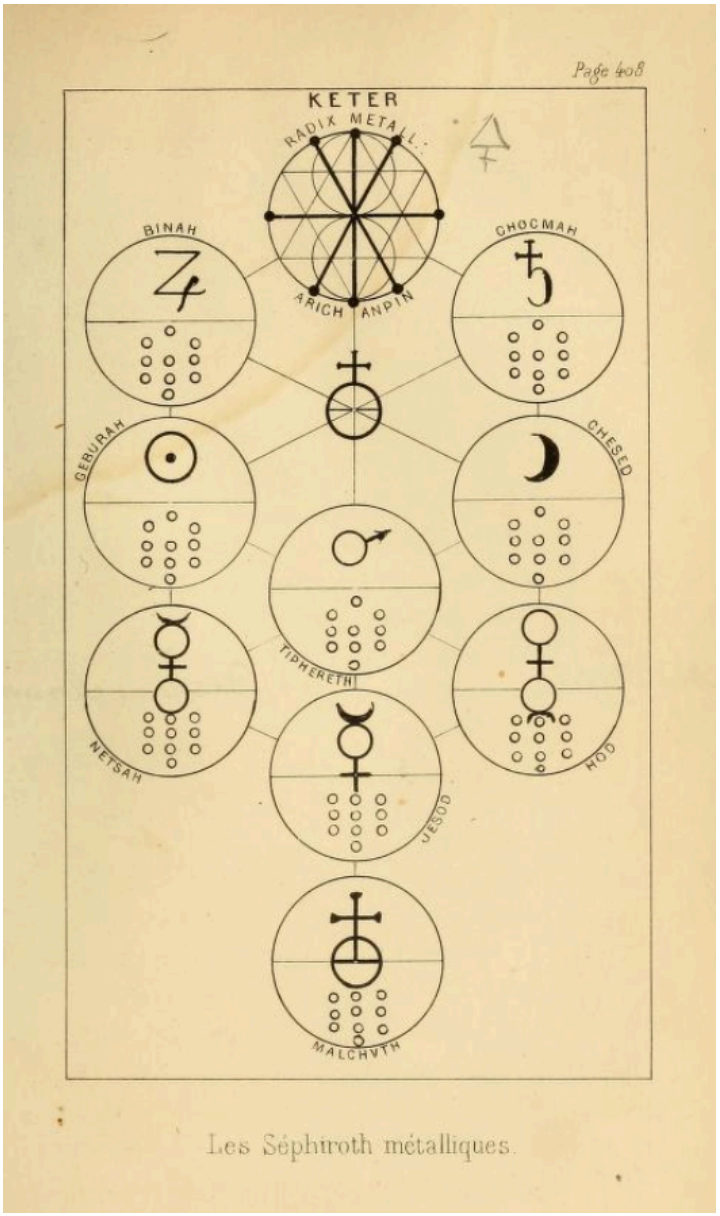
And this section in his treatise of Astrology (Chapter 17) in *Dogma* proves that Levi's greatest act of magic will be killing me:

According to Ptolemy, the sun dries, and the moon moistens; according to the Kabbalists, the sun represents rigorous Justice, and the moon is sympathetic to Mercy.

So… this assigns Sun to *Geburah*/Justice, and Moon to *Chesed*/Mercy. *Geburah* NEVER connects to *tau* in any literature I've ever read. Or to the Sun. *WHICH* Kabbalists Levi? To venture a guess, it feels simply like an extension of Michael as archangel of Justice and well, he is connected to the Sun. But if we follow this problematic attribution, we track it to *The Key to the Great Mysteries*, and its Supplements. There we find the assignment of Sefirot to the alchemical metals, in Levi's translation of the *Fragments From The Asch Mezareph.* And no, if you are wondering, these assignments don't correspond to his epic prank section of attributions in the Kabbalah section in any way, in the order, or in any single logical correspondence following I can think of.

Briefly on *Asch Mezareph*: *According to Raphael Patai and Gershom Scholem, the Aesch-Mezareph dates from the 16th or early 17th centuries.* ***The original Hebrew text, if there was one,*** *does not appear to have survived. The work was* ***first published in Latin in Knorr von Rosenroth's Kabbala denudata****, Sulzbach, 1677-1684. A translation into English was issued in W. Wynn Wescott's 'Collectanea Hermetica' series at the end of the 19th century.* (https://www.alchemywebsite.com/aesch.html)

This is another massive rabbit hole by the way. Suffice to say it gave our boy another excuse to put things into a Tree of Life shape and the assignments are found below.



Numbers represent absolute philosophical ideas. The letters are abbreviated hieroglyphs. This is what he said above the section where he shows the meanings of the letters. And I strongly suspect that no matter where I look, I will not find the correct attributions. Because it's all just one big game with uncle Levi of analogies and metaphors. He uses and plays with letters, Sefirot and Tarot as multifunctional symbols alike.

In the *Supplements* there is one more article on Kabbalah. I find it a despicable work for many reasons, but Levi learned about quotations. So, growth? He is saying wretched shit about Jewish people, the what-aboutisms and weaponizing of anti-Christian satirical text to say "HUH SO YOU ADMIT JESUS DID MIRACLES". I am not owned. You are owned! This is the part that interests me:

In the Zohar, we see the divine mother, the second conception of the Elohim, cooperating in creation, which would have been impossible without her. It is she who calms and tempers the rigors of the paternal yod; it is she who opposes water to fire, and mercy to anger: —

“The fire,” say the authors of the Zohar, “had sprung forth from the divine yod like a serpent, and it was about to consume the earth in its embrace, when the divine mother (may her name be blessed) brought the waters and made the liberating waves walk upon the burning head of the serpent.” Here, remembering that Mary, in Hebrew, means the sea, or the salt of the sea, we understand why she is represented with a crescent moon under her feet; For the Kabbalists say that the moon is the image of the divine τὸς of the Tetragrammaton, of the maternal power of the Elohim, and we are no longer astonished by this immense glory attributed to a mere mortal who, by her immaculate conception, goes back beyond the origin of time.

He didn’t direct me to any of his sources. Why didn’t he tell me where he got this? He did it to Postellus, he did it to one specific part of *Kabbala Denudata i*n the same article. Where is my citation Levi? Cat got your tongue? Which commentator, his religion, his tradition, is he real? Is his name a synonym of someone else? What was he commenting on? For the Kabbalists, he says pointing at his Hydra of sources of about 5000 dense Latin. Moon is *Chesed, beth, Binah, heh, Malkuth*, your mom, your 17-year old wife that fucking divorced you.

Again, this many sources and his pathetic attempt to force them together is in my opinion what created the *yod* as Mother letter nonsense.

Oh and Mary, Greek transliteration of the Hebrew Miriam does not mean “sea” or “salt of the sea”. This was actually discussed around his time, with some alternatives already at ready - it is possible it missed him, as the biggest discussion was after his death, but still. It’s an interesting topic that the Catholic encyclopedia at https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15464a.htm gets into at depth. I will say that it’s curious St. Jerome comes up here, as the guy who very likely started the mistranslation. St. Jerome knew Hebrew and he was the guy who said “hey, let’s translate the Old Testament from Hebrew and not Greek”, creating the Vulgate Bible translation. Levi notes him as a source for Kabbalah back at the letter section of T*he Key to the Mysteries*. This is, presumably, because Jerome talks about the Hebrew letters a bit and hey having Church Father in your bibliography adds prestige. Funny how we keep coming back to the same people. The underlying flaw that rests at any “sea” meaning for Mary is this:

…at any rate, it is based on the assumption that the name miryam is composed of the Hebrew words mar (bitter) and yam (sea). Since in Hebrew the adjective follows its substantive, the compound of the two words ought to read yam mar; and even if the inverse order of words be admitted as possible, we have at best maryam, not miryam…

Which is so fucking funny. Levi probably didn’t know Hebrew well, he didn’t notice this. And even if he did, he needs to somehow force Mary into *Zohar,* a very important Kabbalistic text, through sheer insane force of will. For this purpose, her “salt of the sea” epithet fits. It’s an important woman and she is vaguely connected to water so checkmate atheist!

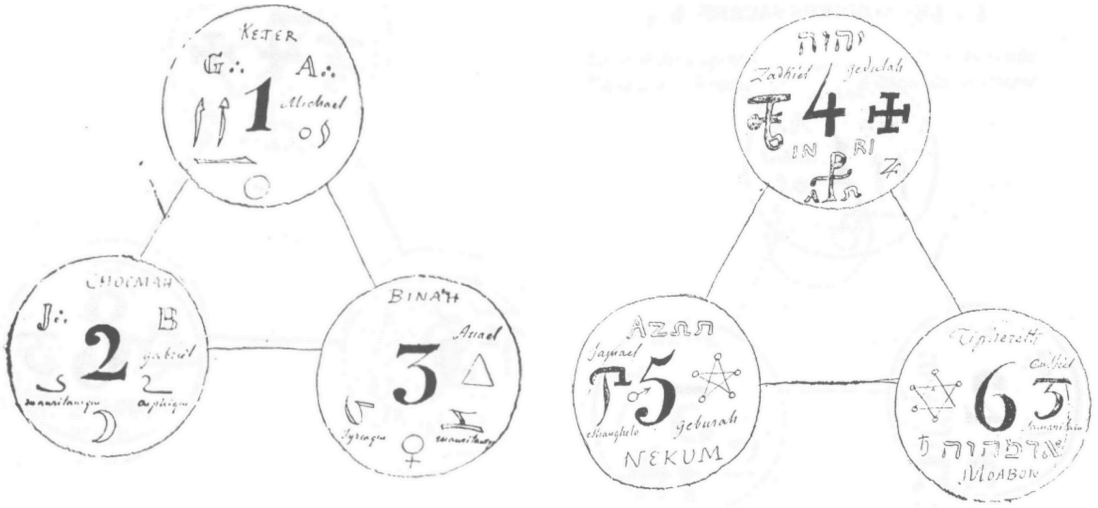
But wait, isn't it supposed to be a “star of the sea”? THAT is a real epithet of Marianic theology. Where did he get the salt from? It’s nowhere in the Catholic Encyclopedia etymology tracing. Did he turn bitter into salty? But bitterness is… a completely different taste… Is it just vague corruption of “salt of the earth?” But that has nothing to do with Mary,

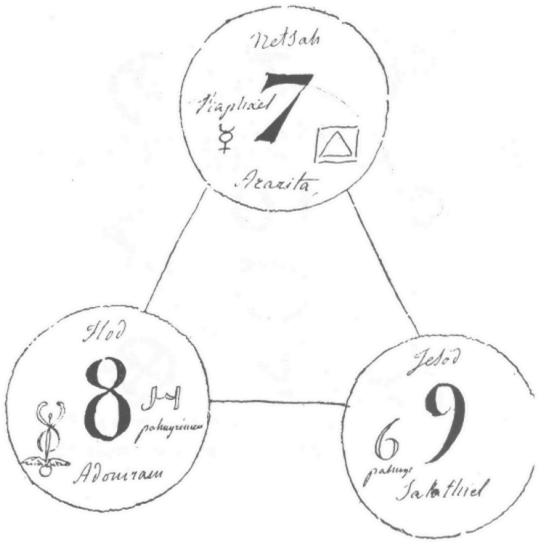
or women, or really anything. Again, nothing. I am literally reading a fucking Bible for this. Why didn't he say the "Star of the Sea"? You still have inferred saltiness from the sea. You also have a star connection to make with the woman "with moon under her feet, crown of stars and cloaked in sun" of Revelations, which he himself refers to in the above passage.

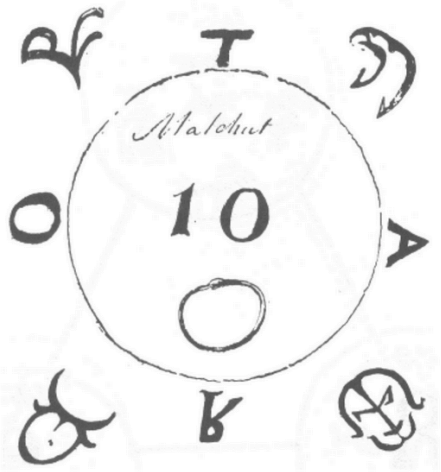
Did he even know his own fucking theology? Is this why he dropped out/was kicked out of seminary? Or is he just doing whatever?

He wasn't doing systems, he was building poetry. As long as *something* rhymed.

Outside of *Dogma et Rituel* and *Le clef des grands mystères,* almost every book focuses on something else and on Kabbalah he usually notes "hey, look at the *Dogma and Ritual of Magic* dude I explained everything there". His *Book of Splendors is* about Masons and also his commentary on *Zohar*, but it gives us zero info on the planet problem. *Clefs majeures et clavicules de Salomon* (*Major Keys and Minor Keys of Solomon*) is actually relevant to Tarot. This book was a quick version of his own working grimoire to his student. - his pentacles and amulet design show his understanding of Minors, but most info on Majors is restated - it has yet another example of his nonsensical attributions, as we can see in the following set of images.







Except for the *Kether - Michael - Sun*. Which….. you know what. Do what you want Levi. I don't even care anymore. This does show that planetary assignment logic in actual grimoire and amulet work could have been flowing from the Sefirot order and so the double letters got assigned planets based on that order basically (even if they don't correspond to Sefirot themselves). This is as close to reconstruction I can get, and it still breaks once we consider this utterly random switch of *Kether* - Sun.

In his ten published letters to one of his students (I found English translation of them in the *Book of Splendors* release), we see this attribution table:

NUMBERS

1 Supreme power 6 Beauty

2 Absolute wisdom 7 Victory

3 Infinite intelligence 8 Eternity

4 Goodness 9 Productivity

5 Justice or harshness 10 Reality

LETTERS

Aleph *Father* ***Lamed*** *Sacrifice*

Beth *Mother* ***Mem*** *Death*

Gimel *Nature* ***Nun*** *Reversibility*

Daleth *Authority* ***Samekh*** *Universal being*

He *Religion* ***Pe*** *Immortality*

Vav *Liberty* ***Ayin*** *Balance*

Zayin *Ownership* ***Sadhe*** *Shadow and reflection*

Cheth *Distribution* ***Koph*** *Light*

Teth *Prudence* ***Resh*** *Recognition*

Yod *Order* ***Tav*** *Synthesis*

Kaph *Force*

These meanings are just Tarot images and it has nothing to do with planets or zodiac or elements.

And he openly tells the guy to just go look at *Dogma* again in one of them, you know, to pick up on what he already wrote. So he still considers that up to date.

*(*There is still *The magical ritual of the sanctum regnum* ... . and well, we'll get to that).

And just going through all these texts one notices *something* when reading Levi even shallowly. Like when in *Grand Splendou*r he shows commentaries on Zohar, but then jumps instantly to use its "two faces of God" formulation to discuss the Christian Devil. When in *History of Magic* he doesn't discuss gnosticism but denounces it violently, for pages. Why he was so pissed about Pope Joan "protestant" fable.

Eliphas Levi fucking Loves Catholicism. He trained for it, he wanted it, he felt immense love for it. And as a note, that's not bad. But it colours everything we read. Everything fundamentally served one goal for him - his proof that Christianity was felt in every religion in every ancient society. A lot of this book and some others devolve ONLY into this matter, making one wonder "Damn, that's crazy but you promised me magic." It becomes hard to sift through, like molten desert sands, especially when he repeats old adages against the Jewish people. All while stripping Jewish mysticism for parts or using them as symbols. I wanted to focus only on discovering his sources and how he formed his ideas, so I could determine the links in the chain, but this is all overpowering - his sadness and arrogance both occupy all his work. And forgive me but I can't ignore the blood dripping from his wounds. In fact I am not certain this blood doesn't cover the conclusion I want like a thick fucking veil. That it is my conclusion. This blood crystallized into a link. Eliphas Levi is willing to use every trick in the book and contradict himself, just to get out of the jam of the questions and problems that tear him apart. Kabbalah, is fundamentally to him a distraction, a tool through which he can redeem the Christian Church for himself. If he finds the universal underpinning of all religion, he can say it's Christianity, and more importantly that is the ritualistic Catholicism he adores.

If you look at Levi's sources, the majority of them are Christians, apologists, Jesuits, neoplatonists. Christian Cabbalah was NOT a neutral learning. It wasn't really a genuine study of Hebrew material, an attempt to build an equitable and similar school of mysticism.

From the very first time Kabbalah was translated and dissected by Christians writers, it developed two explicit goals - facilitate the conversion of Jews and prove the validity of Christian faith. His only sources beyond that are Latin compilations, made by Cabalists with similar goals, and while these *contain* texts and commentaries of actual Jewish people, they are fragments, translated, and fundamentally creating this specific picture. It was never a neutral thing, it was forcing together people with various opinions and readings of the texts into one book, so of course he could fucking cherrypick whatever he needed at the momen.

For my convenience, *Kabbala denudata* by Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, which was also a source for him, *has* a Kabbalistic Lexicon, of many terms. And it also contains just the entries for individual letters. And shoutout Rosenroth, he actually goes through the pluralities of meanings the letter can have AND he worked with fragments of real Jewish teachings, mixed with Christians. You can absolutely shop for meanings there

But you see all the same nonsense. You read through this lexicon, then you get to all the names and attributions they could get in *Zohar* and its commentaries - then INSTANTLY comes the attempt to force Christianity and Plato's teaching on it. It's not a neutral report. It never has been. All of it rotten, multifaceted, multi-authorial, generalized, stretched, butchered. I read the section *Aditus tentatus rationem reddendi Nominum & Ordinis decem Sephirotharum in duabus Tabulis Cabbalifticis, ex Scriptura, Platonismo, Rationequelibera - Translated The Names and Order of the Ten Sephiroth in Two Cabalistic Tablets, from* ***Scripture, Platonism, and Reason and Freedom****.* This text is written by D. Henrici Mori Cantabrigiensis - Wikipedia notes him as a person who worked hard on fusing neoplatonism and Christianity. One thing I will give him is that he at least read Hebrew and he goes out of his way to talk about how there are MANY opinions amongst Jewish commentators and he can't just nail it down fully. But then he just collapses it all anyway, cause he needs to make an argument. Now, what is he arguing? He does all this thinking and categorizing to own the Jewish mystics and say "wow look at you guys, your *Chokmah, Binah, Kether* look like Trinity, you are already kinda Christians! so uh… you wanna get baptized?"

"Adeò ut utracunque ratione Argumentum hoc vim suam obtineat adversus Judaeos"
"So that by either means this argument may obtain its force against the Jews"

That's the final sentence in this section. And it's hard to read anymore. Both because of arguments and the difficulty of OCR not picking up stuff. Somewhere here can be the planetary attribution order I need. But it is above my ability to extract it - and more importantly, even if I did, what would it prove? That he took it from selective reading of people with a serious agenda?

Levi mentions "the learned Jesuit" Athanasii Kircher, who employed and worked with Kabbalah as part of his attempt to solve Egyptian Hieroglyphics. We also see him mentioned by Westcott. Kircher man fused fascination with Egypt with Kabbalah. Hey weren't Jews in Egypt once? Surely they got the "correct" knowledge there! "Yea, Kabbala is a despicable art, but I got asked by the pope to see the spiritual truth in Egyptian hieroglyphics. I must untangle it here so we can see the universal truth … I have to use this wretched corruption of ancient knowledge"! All the same logic, the same syncretism! Gebelín, the first guy to mention Tarot as transmission of Egyptian knowledge did so in a book where he argued for the existence of a universal language from which all other languages came from!

TRUTH? Some hidden Masonic tracts transcribed and put forward, having the “correct attributions” of the Ancients, fantasy that would make Dan Brown jizz? Even if such a thing existed it would probably be nothing more than continuation of this self-serving trend!

Levi turns the image of *The Poppess* into a more palpable universal Isis - he assigns her *beth* and she clearly fits a woman close enough, a passive duality. To see him justify this image on an illustration of woman in priestly robes, when you are just done reading his tract where he venomously talks about how wretched female priests are, it makes one’s head spin (“*This intrusion of the woman into the priesthood was always the dream of the false Gnostics; for by levelling the sexes in this way, they introduced anarchy into the family and posed a stumbling block to society.” - History of Magic, Book III, Chapter VI. Kabbalist Paintings And Sacred Emblems*)

Suffice to say, I needed to understand Levi to know why he made the system. I think I understand only too well now. Crowley’s mocking comment of “not revealing true attribution” is himself failing to understand and forcing his conclusion. And perhaps I don’t understand him either, my head still heavy with frustration. I don’t think there is much else to excavate here - my tastes have left me. I see a man playing with systems he doesn’t even want to know and copying cruel dead men, someone who never saw what he was taking with clear eyes. That’s enough. I will say, his *Occultism Unveiled* does show a man that came to see religion more… lightly and even kindly.

Christian and Papus recontextualized

However, this creates a bind of sorts. If Levi’s presentation of mother letters is false, how did his followers pick up on that and correctly assign astrology to them? And why would they, if he himself barely did?

Let’s think about it for a second. As a reminder, Papus only cites *Rituel* in *The Tarot of the Bohemians* as a justification for his Hebrew letter descriptions, and holy shit, I could actually kiss him on the lips. A guy with a very strong citation instinct is very sexy and refreshing in a sea of all of this. As a reminder, *Dogme* and *Rituel* do not yet carry any astrological attributions. His whole source for astrology is, essentially Christian. Christian’s source is uh… Egyptian papyrus from the Vatican.

To be perfectly frank, this mythical papyrus is just Levi again. Well, not exactly - again, there is astrology that Levi didn’t get into, but the Tarot content is all Levi. The order is the same, together with the telling *The Fool* at the 21st card mark. VERY notably, neither Christian, nor Papus assign elements to the three mothers and their assigned card, almost as if they didn’t know what to assign. This would fit with Levi’s whole deal, after all he just points at two pillars. This is VERY strange in the case of Papus, who by now translated the *Sefer Yetzirah* and really should have read it. I mean, I hope he did. His descriptions of the letters match Levi, because he trusts him. Wrong fucking move, by the way.

There is, however, an interesting case of Papus, simply applying the first ten Sefirot to the first ten cards. I have to admit, I didn’t notice it at first due to how he butchers their names.

This doesn't really touch on the planetary attributions but it was one of things Levi did, and it was very possibly a direct inspiration.

***Hieroglyphic**- The Mouth of Man **Kabbalah** Chocmah **Astronomy** The Moon **Day of the Week** Monday **Hebrew letter** Beth (The tarot of the Bohemians, Chapter X)*

However, he curiously doesn't mention the archangel here, which would make sense if he took the Hebrew letters from *Dogme* e *Rituel*, and trusted Christian with astrology. But *The Key,* where Levi lays out the letter - archangel association, is in Papus' bibliography. That doesn't mean he *had* to take everything from it though, but it's a curious omission nonetheless.

He mentions another guy as a source, Fabre d'Olivet. D'Olivet also touched on Hebrew language, but Eliphas dismisses him:

That is to say, in French, according to Fabre d'Olivet: "Now, the original attraction (greed) was the driving passion of all elemental life (the "inner spring") of nature, the work of Jhôali, the Being of beings." But here, Fabre d'Olivet misses the true interpretation because he was unaware of the great keys of the Kabbalah. (Rituel, Introduction)

So I quickly went through him, but he seems to be just describing Hebrew letters with the ultimate mission to "restore" the "true meaning" of the Hebrew language. Papus took him seriously as a source, but Eliphas didn't. None of it touched the meanings of cards much. He doesn't even show up in the section for Hebrew letters in *The Keys.* He's also insufferable to read but hey, that's just all of these guys by now. You see one person collapse the complexity of every culture into a bland mesh, like a child forcing all the shapes through a square hole, you've honestly seen them all.

But where did Christian get his nonsense, since he seems to be a node of transfer for astrology ? Again, Levi, in *The Keys,* directly talks about planets and zodiac two paragraphs after he is done explaining the letter assignments. The 12 simples and 12 signs are almost too sweet of a thing to resist. And he has The *Key to the Mysteries* in his Bibliography.

Look I am not saying it has to be the same barely justifiable bullshit as 22 cards = 22 Hebrew letters. But it sure seems pointed that way, doesn't it? Again, it's not difficult. Zodiacs are in set order. You just take that order and apply it to simple letters. Planets are easy, you just take uncle Levi at his word, because he is the expert and he would never lie to you, would he? So you *almost* get proper *Sefer yetzirah-like* assignments from the base principles.

But still, what about the *yod* as mother nonsense? Why did that never apply to Christian or Papus? Well… again neither of these people have much to say about mother letters. They don't even draw on their meanings in *Sefer yetzirah* as elemental forces, but they also don't really derive their meanings from Levi. They just point at them awkwardly and move from the image. I think that they noticed Levi bungling it up, and so they quietly just… Wrote about the other three mother letters that he mentions explicitly and that Papus especially would know as explicitly mother letters.

There is a high possibility that either of them read *Kabbala Denudata,* but Christian doesn't mention it at all. Papus *has* it in his bibliography and cites it once on *yod* in Tetragrammatron, when he describes it. So there is a chance he replicated the same source Levi did and that is why the attributions are the same.. That is never out of the question. All of the above is merely theorizing.

The British Disaster - Westcott and Mathers Blasting off Again

Westcott's *Sefer Yetzirah* and the Attribution mishap

We dealt with the French demons and now we have to exorcise the ones in Britain. Westcott released a translation of *Sepher Yetzirah and The Thirty−two Paths Of Wisdom*, which directly connect us to Athanasiusi Kircher's *Oedipi Aegyptiaci*, one of the first works to assign letters to the paths between the Sefirot! Yea this is why I put up his Tree of Life as an example. Westcott was Mather's buddy. He definitely influenced his view on Tarot. And my dear friend actually keeps directly to the SY GRA assignment version in the already mentioned *Isiac table of Bembo*. He assigns the majors as Levi did, other than switching The World and The Fool to *shin* and *tau* respectively (so basically pushing the Fool the the end). His version perfectly corresponds to GRA and he even shouts out *Sefer Yetzirah.*

I can strongly recommend a study of the Sepher Yetzirah, or Book of Formation, as one of the most ancient philosophic schemes of Theosophy known to us. It is far older than the Kabbalistic Zohar. (The Isiac Tablet Of Cardinal Bembo.)

His translation was first released in 1887, around the same time as the Isiac Tablet. Did this version have anything that looks even close to final Golden Dawn attributions?

I wanted to track Westcott honestly on this - why is he saying what he is, what are the attributions he gives and why. Whence did his info come from?

But… one problem about the GRA version. It was only out in Hebrew for much of the 19th century. The first printed version was in Belarus, 1806 and Aryeh Kaplan is considered the first proper English translation. Before him, this recension was not even seen as a distinct category. And neither of these people, as fluent as they were at stealing from Jewish ideas, used actual Hebrew texts in their own translations at first. Again, I made a crucial mistake in assuming any of the people would actually read Jewish tracts! I trusted Christine Payne-Towler with my life on this!

His first version, the one actually released in 1887, around the creation of the Golden Dawn, only used Latin authors as source.

The Preface to the Fourth edition to Westcott's translation puts it like this:

Westcott's translation of the Sepher Yetzirah has been criticised as being "in reality a paraphrase and fulfils few of the conditions required by scholarship." 2 Most commentaries of the Sepher Yetzirah tend to reveal more about the author's own system than they do of

the Sepher Yetzirah. As Westcott had stated in his Introduction his translation was prepared for members of the Theosophy Society, the Hermetic G.D. and the Rosicrucian Society of England.

Westcott offered his edition in 1887 which was translated into English from the Latin versions of Pistorius and Postellus. His second edition (1893) and third edition (1911) were translated from the Hebrew and collated with the Latin versions of Rittangelius, Pistorius and Postellus. (Darcy Kuntz' Preface to the Sepher Yetzirah)

(Yea the guy who said that quote at the beginning is Waite. He couldn't stop beefing with any of these people. He was usually right too.)

When Westcott released a later edition in 1893 he humbly says that his work depended too much on Latin authors, that some versions don't even have planetary assignment, and he mentioned the same Jewish scholar that Papus did in his version. This version also has Supplement to Chapter IV, which has the attribution verses from the translation by Isidor Kalisch.

Mayer Lambert gives:−−Beth to Saturn and the Hebrew Sabbath−−that is Saturday; Gimel to Jupiter and Sunday; Daleth to Mars and Monday; Kaph to the Sun and Tuesday; Peh to Venus and Wednesday; Resh to Mercury and Thursday; and Tau to the Moon and Friday (Westcott's Sepher Yetzirah, Supplement to Chapter IV - this quote is missing in edition 2 so likely added with third release)

Mayer-Lambert published his *Commentaire sur le Séfer Yesira*, *ou livre de la Création par Saadiah* in 1891. His attributions are found, accordingly, in majorities of Hebrew fragments (crosschecked with Kaplan's book), as we mentioned in the Papus section. So he is out as the main source.

Westcott also smugly says this in the notes:

In each planet the learned Jesuit Kircher allots Beth to the Sun, Gimel to Venus, Daleth to Mercury, Kaph to Luna, Peh to Saturn, Resh to Jupiter, and Tau to Mars. Kalisch in the supplementary paragraphs gives a different attribution; both are wrong, as an adept cultured clairvoyant could prove. Consult the Tarot symbolism given by Court de Gebelin, Eliphaz Levi, and my notes in the "Isiac Tablet of Bembo." ***The true attribution is however, not anywhere printed****. The planet names here given are Chaldee words.*

*The Seven Heavens and the Seven Earths are printed with errors, and I believe intentional mistakes, in many occult ancient books. P****rivate Hermetic MSS have the correct names and spelling. (****Westcott's Sepher Yetzirah, Notes on Chapter IV****)***

So. Let's try to trace the origins of Westcott's attributions in the *Isiac Table*. In versions, which do not have assignments related to verses, I just take that order. At this point I was desperate.

	Westcott	**Meyer****	**Kircher***	**Kalisch**	**Postellus**	**Rittangel**	**Pistorius**

	(Isiac 1887)	(1830)	(1855)	(1877)	(1552)	(1642)	(1587)
Beth	*Luna*	*Sun*	*Sun*	*Luna*	*Sun*	*Sun*	*Sun*
Gimel	*Mars*	*Ven*	*Ven*	*Mars*	*Ven*	*Ven*	*Ven*
Daleth	*Sun*	*Mer*	*Mer*	*Sun*	*Mer*	*Mer*	*Mer*
Kaph	*Ven*	*Luna*	*Luna*	*Ven*	*Luna*	*Luna*	*Luna*
Phe	*Mer*	*Sat*	*Sat*	*Mer*	*Sat*	*Sat*	*Sat*
Resh	*Sat*	*Jup*	*Jup*	*Sat*	*Jup*	*Jup*	*Jup*
Tau	*Jup*	*Mars*	*Mars*	*Jup*	*Mars*	*Mars*	*Mars*

**No SY text, Kircher just showed me a table with attributions.*
*** Johann Friedrich Meyer should not be confused with Mayer Lambert mentioned earlier.*

So…All Westcott Latin sources were versions without specific letter-planet attributions - just the one verse that lists out planets. The Isiac Table attribution is however identical to Kalisch's and Kalisch did have the specific one by one planet attribution verses.

Did he simply take a convenient edition that was already there (Isidor Kalisch)? He does mention him, as early as second edition:

Quite recently, and since the completion of my translation, my attention has been drawn to a version by Isidor Kalisch, in which he has reproduced many of the valuable annotations of Meyer.

7. He produced Lamed, predominant in Sexual desire, crowned it, combined and formed with it Libra in the Universe, Tishri in the Year, and the private parts of Man. (Kalisch gives "gall.") (Westcott's Sepher Yetzirah, Supplement to Chapter V.)

Aside - Kalisch didn't just reproduce annotations of Meyer. His work is the first English translation specifically for the American Jewish community. Acting like he is just a valuable transmission of Meyer is fucking condescending.

In second edition he also notes the following Hebrew translations that he "examined:"

Version by Saadiah, ab. ben David, and three others — Mantua, 1562 Version with commentary of Rabbi Abraham F. Dior — Amsterdam, 1642 Version with preface by M. ben J. Chagiz — Amsterdam, 1713 Version — Constantinople, 1719 Version — Zolkiew, 1745 Version by Moses ben Jacob, Zozec — 1779 ***Version — Grodno, 1806*** *Version — Dyhernfurth, 1812 Version — Salonica, 1831 MSS. copy dated 1719 — British Museum (Westcott's Sepher Yetzirah, Introduction)*

So, he later HAD access to the GRA version. But I can't prove that he took from it - there are many editions here. Nor can I prove it was his primary source for the attributions in *Isaiac Table.*

The biggest problem is that I can't access the first edition to see if the "lol everyone is wrong" note existed there. It exists in some museums but it's one of those things you have to go see in person. As such, I don't know what was in there and what was floating in his head in 1887. Most of the available info is from the second edition onward, way after the Golden Dawn attributions were codified, where he has space to be going "Oh yea btw those are all wrong, the truth is hidden in a book I know about tee hee."

To explain the mystery of the *Isiac Tablet* attributions, the simplest answer is that back in 1887 he simply went fuck it and took from Kalisch. Kalisch worked with many Hebrew manuscripts and even notes in one section that he chose Luria's wording over one that was more common. So we know he had access to the version that GRA was reacting to, which might share these verses. In 1893 Westcott had access to GRA manuscript, but that is irrelevant to the fact that in 1887 he only gave a fuck about Latin translations, which means Postellus, Pistorius and Rittangel. It's DEEPLY problematic to dismiss a man like that, while using his work without credit.

Beyond all this posturing and tangle of info, it shows that Westcott knew these planetary attributions were variable.

The true attributions… What does our dear friend Westcott who would never lie to us mean?

Westcott, Eliphas Levi and Sanctum Regnum,

The magical ritual of the sanctum regnum is a super short tract, supposedly found in Trithemius' book, notes scribbled on the margins. Westcott collated them and added his commentary and released it in 1896. It seems to be just shortened notes from *Dogma* and *Rituel* together with some rituals. The Levi part is almost worthless, it's all a repeat of stuff in short chapters. Thank God, I am so fucking tired of reading him.

Westcott seems to barely engage with actual content of the chapters, instead putting together basic meanings of the Tarot cards and the notes.

Of relevance are the following quotes:

The First Tarot Trump is named Le Bateleur, and in English is spoken of as the Magician. Levi remarks in one of his works that the arms and body of the figure bear a resemblance to the first letter, Aleph, of the Hebrew alphabet, in some packs of the oldest designs; but the student will do wisely to consult his intuition, if he have no adept instructor, as to the true attribution of this or either of the other trumps of the Tarot.

—--

The Twelfth Tarot Trump, named the Hanged Man, is the most closely veiled of all Tarot hieroglyphics. Its real meaning is now known to but very few; there is the gravest doubt

whether Levi knew it himself. Papus, who has produced a work on the Tarot, gives a clearly faulty explanation. Neither Etteilla nor Court de Gebelin grasped the hidden meaning. But its significance has in some cases been found by clairvoyant visions, and in a few by intuition. The key is held by such as know rightly to which Hebrew letter it belongs and the correspondences of that letter. (The magical ritual of the sanctum regnum, 1st and 12th chapter respectively)

So I think this is an implication that Westcott is hinting at the "true" (Golden Dawn) correspondence. That Mem = HUNG Man and that Aleph belonged to Fool. Again with the ARG tactics - he was part of the organisation that had been using them by now.

And… this is merely an aside. Confirmations of what we suspected. But… Isn't this…convenient? That we can't find the original? Oh well, let's not worry about that right now.

So about that Cipher Manuscript

But this explains nothing about what was changed between Westcott and what was actually assigned to the Golden Dawn system. Because even these correspondences that he put forward in 1887 are NOT in the final and approved curriculum. And I don't know why Westcott suddenly changed his attributions around 1887 and 1888. Is he saying he and his group discovered the real esoteric order hidden in the Tarot ? Are the attributions in the *Isaiac Table*t a cover? That's just a classic isn't it. After all, Mathers also invoked Levi's attributions uncritically while playing cute in 1888 about the esoteric undercurrent. It seems to be the same tactic - no wonder they were buddies.

To look at the origin of Golden Dawn attributes, we need to look at the Cipher Manuscript they obtained. It's a small stack of folios written in English cipher (based on *Polygraphiae* of the Abbot Johann Trithemius). It contains grades, rituals, curriculum, and very notably some sketches of Tarot trumps and the tables of attributions. It's been deciphered by now and is available online. https://hermetic.com/gdlibrary/cipher/cipher1

As a reminder, this is the document they've found that justified their new Order. Or so they claim. By now we have a solid evidence that the letters from the German Rosicruzian Anna Sprengel were a fucking fraud, a smoke screen, a justification, a providence giving blessing to open new order, which just keeps fucking happening doesn't it. It has been watermarked as being from 1809, which doesn't check out with it containing some details, such as proper Egyptian translations, which wouldn't have been possible until the 1820 Rosetta Stone breakthrough. Ellic Howe (*The Magicians Of The Golden Dawn)* and Dummett&Decker (*A History of the Occult Tarot*) are the major critical examiners of this fraud. I only touch on some interesting bits because this essay is long enough and I recommend these books on the topic.

Hell, the fakeness of these documents was one of the parts that caused the Order to implode as its own members (of course it was Waite at first) noticed the fakeness.

Our two boys got it from a bloke called Woodford, who passed the documents to his mate Westcott before he died. There is even one note on it that deciphers to French, to perhaps suggest Eliphas Levi (Folio 46). Hey, remember how Crowley claimed that Levi had a proper attribution table in a private manuscript?

The Cypher translates into English, yet they came to me from a correspondent in France with a history that they had passed through Levi s hands and indeed a loose page among them has a note signed A.L.C. -> (Westcott's note on the contact with Woodford on how he got these Manuscripts, *The Magicians Of The Golden Dawn, Suspect Documents*)

So… we don't even really know if he actually talked with the guy about it and both *A History of the Occult Tarot* and *The Magicians of The Golden Dawn suggest* that he very likely faked this correspondence as well.

On this copy Westcott wrote: 'Mathers has original in the Box at the office.'

It is necessary to question even this apparently innocent statement, because in the absence of the original letter there is the possibility that the document might have been fabricated. (The Magicians Of The Golden Dawn, Suspect Documents).

Translator and Masonist Mackenzie was suggested as a source for these documents, the story goes, but I can't find anything from him that would suggest anything about planets. He met Levi once, might have seen his original Tarot, showed interest in writing a book about Tarot which never came to be, but his *Cyclopedia* is genuinely a piece of sober writing. It openly says there is no connection between Kabbalah and Masonry for example. He might have had a different opinion on the Tarot, which is not really Masonic, but I can't prove that. The *Cyclopedia* contains many Orders and their Grades and there is proof Westcott and Mathers yoinked that from him and his description of a certain Rosencruzian Order and used them for their Golden Dawn.

A History of the Occult Tarot shows proof that his manuscript on Tarot was abandoned and notes given to Mathers.

By December 1885 he had abandoned all intention to write a book on the Tarot, telling Westcott in a letter, 'I am not at present writing about the Tarot. It was a projected work some years ago and fell through. I may perhaps resume it some day ... The subject is terribly intricate and I have not the same means of literary command I formerly possessed'. He added that he had given 'Bro. Mathers' (S.L. Mathers) a prospectus of the book. An important effect of Mackenzie's interest in the Tarot was to arouse that of Westcott in the subject. (A History of the Occult Tarot)

Prospectus is, however, a small description of the book, usually for the purpose of advertising, not enough to be 60 folios that are written in a weird cipher. You're not sending that to your fucking publisher.

Howe ends his own description of the manuscript on a rather depressing note, which I see no reason to distrust:

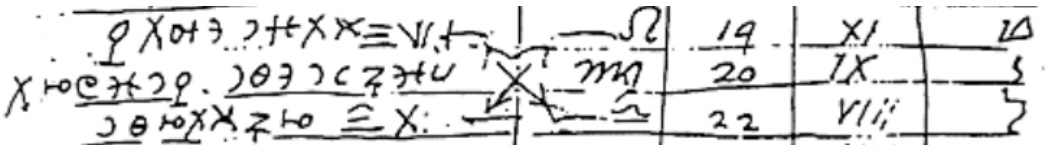
It is impossible to deduce from the manuscript who made the summary notes of Ceremonies' and this mystery may never be solved. (The Magicians Of The Golden Dawn, Suspect Documents)

So this is a document which, no one knows what to make something out of, with even every explanation being possible. Wikipedia has a nice list of all of them. Was it just the invention of Mathers and Westcott? Is it some form of Mackenzie's notes? Is this material from the alchemy focused secret society - Society of Eight - and that's where MacKenzie got it? What if its legitimate notes were found from some German Rosencruzians group? Theories, theories theories, which all give possibilities but don't show me a clear way to discover what these men were thinking and who were they taking this from. Lost in the labyrinth of lies of generations of esotericists, I cry out to the sun streaking above as the Minotaur devours me like Kronos devoured his child.

The Foundation of Modern English Attributions

While tracking the influence behind Cipher Manuscript is a genuine hard wall for me, because these people don't believe in citations, they believed in vibes, and knowing it was most likely falsified (Westcott and Mathers could claim they have a mother but I wouldn't fucking believe them), it's still the foundation of their rituals. This is the destination we have been waiting for, so let's see what it says about Tarot cards.

On folio 32 we can see not only the first indication of the Fool as the first Card (0=1) we can also see the indication for another curious part of GD which is switching the *Strength* and *Justice* cards. Their new order produced…something. The switch clearly arises from the fact that there's now a somewhat defendable visual zodiac sequence, however *Strength* and *Justice* clearly belong to the opposite zodiac sign as opposed to one they ended up with(having Lion and Scale you know). As such, this switch of cards was egalitarian, and also gave the narrative of *restoring the original order* from the veiled assignments.



From Page 51 onward we have a whole lecture on Tarot. There's the classic explanation on the Qabbalah elements, the 3 elements, 7 planets and 12 signs. And in the following folio we can see all proper attributions now and the Strength and Justice not switched yet!

What follows in this lecture is exposition on how and why is the true order the opposite from what was intended. But even this is framed almost as a discussion and working through the problem, rather than ancient truth.

First cometh the numbered. The of the heavens = negative, then 1 = the opened out into a right light - the positive.

This is *Zohar* based justification for the order of the Majors being changed - it's Kabbalistic cosmology. *Fool* comes first, because the Sefirot came from the Nothingness (extremely simplified).

These two numbers have corrupted Egyptian titles to the Mat. To the 1 patan these are maut - mother goddess, and Pekht = extension Maut of all extended through the universe extended and about the shoulders of that great goddess is nature in her exalted

I have no idea what 1 patan is. I saw another transcript of this that says a word closer to pagat, which is the Italian title for *the Juggler*. And this is possibly meant to say "0 to the Mat", which is Italian *Fool* (there is a shape that looks like 0 there, if you look at the folio itself*)*. The rest seems concentrated on the idea that Maut (Mat the goddess of justice) and Pekht (Pakhet, the lion goddess of hunt) have been transposed as a result of this reassignment. And how this is possibly justified because the Last card is just Maat again, but like the Universe in her extended aspect. (Shouldn't it be Nut?) It feels like defense of the *Fool* as *aleph* , like hey we didn't fuck it up completely. Then -

Causeth a transposition, for these are cognate symbols, but at one time the sword of Justice was the Egyptian knife symbol of the sickle of Leo, while the scales meant the [Sun] having quitted the balance point of highest declination. To the female and the lion gave the idea of [Venus], Lady of [Libra] repressing the fire of Vulcan ([Saturn] in [Libra] exalted). But earliest was the lion goddess to [Leo] and Ma to [Libra] with her scales. And this is better. Also [Libra] was given to [Venus] and her is at one time."

Even if the *Fool* at the front causes a problem, there is an attempt to explain it away with some vague pointing towards equinox and astrology. This is interesting - it follows discussion on how to arrange the Tarot and comes towards resolution for rearrangement, after making a case for the original order. Almost as if the whole system *is* more flexible than it appears. Mathers knew of historical tarots, he mentions Grigoneur in his 1888 pamphlet, so he would know that they too changed orders between cards, as these cards moved regions. I suspect this would be his justification if push came to shove and he had to explain with the gun to the head.

But it's the last few pages which have the real interesting bits:

The Fool is given air moveable and never permanent. The Juggler is the natural symbol of Mercury the god of tricksters and also the deeper knowledge. The High Priestess finds her nature in the [Moon]. Venus - Empress. [Aries] = Emperor. For in that sign is the Sun exalted and so on with the others in each shalt thou find its natural attribution

She finds her nature in the moon. I expected rigorous proof for every card. Something. *Sefer Yetzirah* callout at least. But this is just… using visuals to approve and prove the cards. Fucking CHRIST.

The Emperor gets a proof - Aries is a place in zodiac where the Sun is exalted (basically it really fucking loves being there and its impact is stronger). It's a weird fucking proof that in my opinion vaguely points to the Cards as related to the paths on Tree of Life that they represent. Golden Dawn also assigned planets to Sefirot themselves. I suppose *the*

Emperor's path is between *Tifaret* (Solar) and *Chokmah*. But then you have to wonder… if that's the case. Why is *High Priestess* who corresponds to the path between *Tifaret* and *Kether*, fucking Moon? We *know* Mathers and Westcott more or less invented this new planetary order, the only thing that needed to be tinkered with.

There is a strong case to be made that their fundamental guiding force was the least amount of friction based on images. The proof is that *Strength* and *Justice* were switched on the account of the image alone.

The reason why I painstakingly traced the origins of Westcott's attribution in his own *Sefer Yetzirah*, all exploded in this. I wanted reasoning - he showed he doesn't give a fuck about it as a source. These assignments were simply shifted based on their needs and their proclaimed ancient order. There is likely nothing less and nothing more to it. But it's worth it to say that Eliphas Levi, as I've painstakingly shown, did it too. The student has become the master.

It's all fucking patchwork. There is no logic. Engage in Bacchanalia of chaos and orgies of wine.

My Capitulation

And now we have to go through the biggest problem of this whole section. We have limited knowledge of Golden Dawn's Inner Circle. Or at least I don't. Maybe someone out there got some documents, or something. Israel Regardie leaked a lot of documents on rituals and the books circulated in the Golden Dawn's teaching in 1936. However, he was actually not even involved with the original Order, but in one of its spiritual descendants created by an original member. So, how far away are his notes from the original intent? Felkin, the man who created this organization after Golden Dawn imploded WAS in the so called Inner Order (remember he co-wrote Book T with Mathers), but we can't tell how much he edited when he changed ships.

Not even Crowley got into the Inner Order properly, he got into right before it collapsed. Most of his attributions and Thelemic basis were based on his own work on correspondences and his own esoteric backing. Sure, something comes from the Order info he leaked more than once, but again, that's not Inner Order material. So Thoth Tarot is out as a decent source!

What about Waite? He was in the Inner Order, but he was also primarily a Christian mysticism fan, who even briefly took over remnants of GD and removed everything that wasn't meditation focused on that aspect. He then made his own group. His tarot, the damned fucking thing we see everywhere, is also pretty covert and contains a lot of shout-outs to the Golden Dawn teachings, such as the *Strength-Justice* switch, but not much else. His *Pictorial Key* is short on the details of the cards. So, we never really got much out of him.

It's genuinely baffling to me that I can see Levi more clearly than one of the biggest sources of esoteric groups and thinking in the 20th century. Golden Dawn truly compressed the idea of taking it from your teacher, debunking it, taking it over as an esoteric tradition and made it into a factory of mass produced dickheads. And here is a problem - beyond that the lines get

so confused and crossed between many people who wrote about, that I can't keep up anymore. As such, I cut off my findings and research here. Perhaps unfairly. However, this reaches my limit. My research stops with Cipher manuscript because to me that's where the correspondences of Golden Dawn crystallized.

The Resolution and What we have learned

So was it' "Moon is for the girls"?

So, this whole headache aside. The insane source problems. Aside.

What about our *Priestess*? And her Moon? Ye, remember when that was what I wanted to get into? And here is where I'll say I genuinely don't fucking know! As we go from Gebelin and Mellet, the authors hallucinate on her a lunar crown, as they see Isis. The Moon connections that got fused to her is a result of Eliphas Levi syncretism nonsense, even if Gebelin is more careful. He does say a shit ton about *beth* as a woman, and so clearly a Moon. Then, Westcott and Mathers did their own gamer moves and just… Invented new assignments. The Cipher manuscript, wherever they fucking got it from honestly just gives no justification to the switch based on Hebrew letters, it merely states "It is according to her nature". So. That's fucking that. She just is Moon now. Isn't it convenient that she and the *Empress* got to keep their feminine planets? I am not saying that's all the reason there is. But after dragging myself through these manuscripts, the *High Priestess* is so oversaturated with the "WOMAN WOMAN WOMAN" attributes that I find it difficult not to believe it wasn't at least a factor.

The truth is, I didn't find the smoking gun for anyone. For Levi, his reason can easily rest in *Pistorius' Artis Cabbalistica* or *Rosenroth's Kabbala Denudata* and there is nothing I can do, because I can't read Latin. Mathers and Westcott can too show their work in one of many of their writings I didn't fully analyze. But… I think I've discovered something regardless.

There is a lot of material and commentaries that connect *beth* to *Binah*, and some of it directly talks about lunar nature, and about femininity. Kabbalah, especially from medieval times onward, very much invoked gender polarity. But it's not the source of it for Levi, nor for Golden Dawn. To them, if this polarity wasn't here, they would have just moved it to another part of the deck.

Alchemy, neoplatonism and Greek philosophy in general also pushed strongly in the direction of enforcing gender binary on concepts. To many people usage of sex and gender was a strong allegory and metaphor, and through "as above as below" they thought it applied to higher spheres as well. If the below is gendered and this gendering produces creation - then the above too must be gendered to be able to procreate. This instinct, to use the powerful metaphor of sexual reproduction is simply what underpinned a lot of mythologies, because it was, in many ways, the totality of knowledge that captured the imagination. It's still used even today!

At every point all esotericists pushed into things they believed, creating loose connections, discarding what didn't work. They cherrypicked. Made chains to confirm their own logic. It

was their choice. They didn't accept everything as it appeared. But the gender thing they carried forward. To them, what was presented was a simple depiction of binary, which has to be the feminine, simply a reflection of a man, simply a rib of Adam. And then you look at Tarot, and what's that? On the second card is a woman. Just sitting, with a book. So hey, let's connect her to every other woman in mythology ever (except some that we need for the *Empress*, let's not run out of ALL the women guys) and also oh, *beth* was seen as possibly feminine by some commentators on Kabbalah? Wow our job here is done, everything checks out, this was easy, case closed, move on. This was just something carried forward by the whole momentum.

If their basis was a deck where the second card was a man, they wouldn't focus on the Moon. They would have adopted arguments that it's the Holy Spirit, or Jesus, something that one of the dozens of Christian commentators said. What I mean to say is that yes, I think gender of the figure absolutely played a role, and it was an easy solution based on the environment of esoteric thinking back then.

What I've learned, Reflections

I found this whole excursion an exercise in frustration but also illuminating. I've never been able to pierce the curtain of the High Priestess herself here, but I' ve been drowning in her waters all the same. And I've picked up knowledge and information I never did before, and followed my own path. I can't do Tarot card meditation but it's almost like Meditation on *Hermit* or *High Priestess*, and ultimately it got me Right into the Scary *Moon* with the madness and barking of dogs.

The question that naturally arises from this is "Does any of this matter?" People have known that Golden Dawn was kind of a bogus for years now and yet Tarot keeps going on. But really, is it fair of me to even call them bogus? Many authors on Tarot's history did just that. However, they were outsiders to the practice and non-spiritual and honestly just saw the whole thing as a fraud.

The question and honest answer is that every single person here created a system that was satisfactory for them and did the job they wanted it to do and legitimately produced interesting ideas. People use their pathworking ideas, their magic. It produced a legitimate legacy of its own, and much of occult and esoteric groups, including Wicca and modern witches owe their practices to the Golden Dawn and its alumni. Beyond that, many of these people were trying. They were trying desperately to reach the outer truth. Their systems did something and despite problems remain largely logically consistent and workable to the people who include them into their practices.

What we can call bogus is that every step of the way we see the same problem over and over. The invocation of some ancient sources, some wisdom further and further away. No I have it right - the guy before me was bluffing concealing knowledge or just wrong. Now I have the knowledge. No one can just say hey I made this and created something coherent. We place so much focus on the whole, "am I right" image. What sells is certainty, and history, after all, is certainty. It worked for someone, so clearly there is something to it.

And this is a problem even today. Some people will suddenly release a limited edition of Golden Dawn tarot that is realer than those we have before. (problems fixed! more accurate to the real version!) People will scoff at Tarot then turn to Marseille editions and claim them ancient or better based on their wisdom. People will scoff at anything but seeing the cards as Renaissance metaphor, which to them holds the true wisdom. I have seen an article where someone selling courses on cartomancy claimed that Tarot is the corrupted version of the wisdom of playing cards, which they CLEARLY have because “4, 13, 52 were magic numbers in Ancient Egypt”. We just keep doing it over and over. Chasing our own tail in the darkness of the past to pass as a sliver of Knowledge and usually selling it as a course.

I get it partly. Occasionally I get hit by a possession to search up queer history and then get disheartened by the fact so much of it is records of pederasty. But do I need that truth to be something here? Why can’t I simply admit that a lot of stuff is fragmented by design, by lack of archivation? Why do I reject the idea of modern history being meaningful on its own, knowing for sure that people like me felt the same things, even if they comprehended them differently? Again… The need for ancient explanation is a deeply implanted impulse. And for these people it was a rallying cry that allowed them to make their secret societies and draw people into it. We will see that true wisdom is a better position to draw from than proving your system from something. It gives you solid ground. And even I did it, chasing Levi’s attribution to the ends of Earth, feeling it close, hunting it like my own white whale. And for what? Was I truly scared there was something ancient? That would prove I am wrong and misunderstanding him, that there *is* something I have to listen to? I had to dig deeper. The idea that the whole tradition rested on imaginative reading seemed unrealistic to me, even though, why would it be?

Mathers, Eliphas, Christian, Gebelín all called out to something ancient to prove the wisdom of Tarot, which to me lies, simply enough, in the universal power of humanity. The ability to notice and see patterns. The power to organize your thoughts, to mediate and this gain more insight from what you’ve seen before. For Gebelín, he saw the story of human’s fall from the Monde Primitif, the Golden Age, whose language he was recovering. For Christian it was a convenient set of tales of induction into secret societies. For Levi, it was a good symbolic concept that permitted ease and flexibility, a symbol worthy of his universal religion. Notice all of the ways Levi used *High Priestess* in different connotations changing her from this, to that based on context.

The prophets spoke in parables and images because abstract language was lacking to them, and because prophetic perception, being the feeling of harmony or universal analogies, is naturally expressed through images. (Rituel de la haute magie)

He was so close.

In trying to turn Tarot into something that was always ancient, they accidentally succeeded in proving the main power for which it’s used even today. They just weren’t honest about it.

And there is the real problem of just consuming whatever we see and inherit without thinking about it, considering every connection and universalization impulse just. Esotericists included a MASS of something that was appropriated by Christians from Jewish mystics. They also took from Indian and Buddhist sources without thinking much about it, as long as it

created something. This is how ideas propagate, but these people committed to the simple idea of enlightened universalism, not noticing their own bias and ignoring the function these belief and thought systems played in their cultures. They made many mistakes and repeated distortions openly. Should we just recreate that? This is a deep ethical undercurrent to all of this and in the end, it depends on people doing the magic, but again - I strongly urge at least basic education on the topics, so as to not commit to speaking about these already misunderstood and sometimes violently erased cultures. People can't just erase all bad from their spirituality and things they inherited. But we needn't be Eliphas Levi, shamefully holding onto ideas and defending them with spite. He repeated anti-semitic theories and books made to convert Jews into Christians, because he needed to believe his Church was right. I'd even say we *shouldn't* be that. I don't think the solution is just stopping and imploding one's spiritual practice. But the question of what to do with our inheritance is a personal one, since practices outside of institutional religions are deeply individual. What is my goal? What do I gain? What do I absorb? That to me is the core, but what to do is just… difficult to Answer. The reason for my carefulness is that I *know* that simply wholesale replacing one's whole spirituality is difficult and must be left to the practitioner. I hope it doesn't come across as excusing these facets.

This whole idea for the essay started because to me, a lot of notes surrounding High Priestess sound like a result of a common esoteric misogyny. Eliphas alone and how he saw women is very much worthy of a stop. But is it bad to keep doing it? Is that what she has to be? Meanings for Tarots changed. In the 70s when it started to become a real thing, people, many of them women, slowly shifted their meanings based on their own meanings. Almost every card shifted with the world that changed. Our *Priestess* was Isis, Diana, the Wicca Goddess, the reminder of femininity, young girl, Sophia the goddess of Knowledge, a contrast to exoteric religion etc. etc. Many people took her in today and changed her to be what we need - today. A respected femininity and womanhood. Not one that is merely a reflection, a pale version of the masculine, not just a rib. Meanings are created not just *ex nihilo* but in response to something. But again, these thoughts are not isolated. Moon as a feminine force is an ancient metaphor, but one that eventually turned into cosmic truth grasped by all of cultural baggage. The whole polarity of feminine and masculine is like that, and insistence on it made several Wicca groups hostile to queer people of all kinds. Never examined if it was just a metaphor or truly a deep cosmic truth that demands whole groups of people as unable to work with it for no reason. To recruit *Empress* into this as well, Eliphas didn't even see this card as a woman. He saw the womb, the child that arose from a combination of masculinity and femininity. In one tract of his he describes that *"a pride of a man is his golden head, and pride of a woman her silver womb"*. We can respect both of them, we can point out how being a woman is still important to a massive amount of people and how that experience reflects in these cards. But do we have to engage with these words and their legacy? Again, we can't remove this core, this past and again, every person has their own needs. But just saying "this is how it was/is" is not enough, in my eyes.

So, here are my cards on the table - I am a secular ex-Christian. I engage in Tarot because I love its combinatorics and organizational usages in creating meaning. The history of Tarot fascinates me partly because of the layers of false truths created around it. Unlike many people I consider this a natural evolution of it. I've been deeply inspired by Markus Katz and Rachel Pollack, who got me into this idea of wonder, play, and myth-making. Even Camelia Elias who I find … a touch annoying to read, said something great "I don't care about the

history, I care about the reading". That's what Tarot is to me, and why I love it in all its forms, modern, ancient, etc. I will never fully understand what it means to someone spiritual or religious who uses it as part of their practice. However, I can assure you, many of these people know about the gaps and intelligently engage with them. Trying to beg for rationalism assumes that that worldview is the only one that matters or produces a worthy meaning.

To me Tarot cards simply took on a side as a different tool. No, no one now is debasing their noble use as the instrument of gambling, but simply adding their own page to their varied use. We can't simply look at recent history and proclaim it invalid, like we can only search for meaning in "exotic" lands and lost times. Historically, people found meaning and usage in anything they had on hand.

If this excursion has shown me anything, it is that Tarot is in many ways not unlike Rosencruzians. To briefly explain the history – someone in Germany posted three pamphlets showing the descent of a secret society of ancient wisdom. It wasn't true and its very probable author later regretted publishing it. However, many societies did emerge based on this, with even Golden Dawn itself coming from this family tree. In the same way, the modern Tarot foundation is based on an esoteric core that is not historically grounded or "true", but does it matter? It has become its own living tradition of many approaches.

I just hope we can be more honest than our predecessors.

Final disclaimer

I myself am not a perfect observer. My grasp on languages is weak. I can't go through Kircher's or Rosenroth's whole tract because just a few pages is tiring. I don't know the context for many of the people involved or the orders. The Mackenzie connection is where I am lost the most - a lot of my knowledge is Tarot hyperfixation derived. What is this Masonic shit? This is my hobby, not my work. I have other hobbies and I really just want to finish my Kingdom Come Deliverance hardcore playthrough to be honest . Also I am an idiot, who shortens observation and simplifies complex causes because I was already stressed by how long this was getting. In many ways, I am one of these men. Waite, Crowley, Papus, Levi. I won't pretend otherwise. I welcome corrections where my interest fails me. This was born out of legit curiosity, and my own frantic attempt to trace it.

I also skipped over reproducing a lot of Levi's actual misogyny and anti-semitism, but it's there. It's absolutely there and I want to warn people about it in case they want to read him. He is seen as more approachable as Golden Dawn or Crowley, and it's true he is less outspoken about his bigotry than Crowley was, but I would say it is everywhere in his writing nonetheless.

ADDENDUM - the Fucking Eliphas' tarot

As if by the hands of Eliphas' ghost himself, while looking into another thing, I found out we have an actual replica of his own tarot, and he drew some designs collected outside of his

publications. Crying ‘oh, come the fuck ON’ and throwing my hands up, I returned to this manuscript of my own. Adding it here, because I discovered this after EVERYTHING else.

Other than the actual personal version of *Claviculi di Solomon* being sold to some bigshot private person in November of 2025, the situation’s been pretty quiet. But a year before that Marco Benedetti released some images of Levi’s as cards, together with his personal copy of the Marseille Tarot he, uh, scribbled on. Added many correspondences, grimoire sigils and drew Hebrew letters over the figures. I know this because I have been jealously looking at videos of people who can afford his historical reproductions. A lot of notes on this are hidden on Facebook which I refuse to go on, so, yet again, working with limited info, mostly from watching the videos on the Marco deck. Marylin from Tarot Clarity made a series of awesome videos on this deck, showing off every card..

Levi also replicated some Alluete deck cards. Alluete is a pretty funky Spanish playing card deck with nifty decor on the pip cards. He got this move from de Mellet and Gebelin, who both claimed that this deck points to the “Egyptian source” of the cards. Then there are some of his other prints, which don’t correspond to any Tarot, like Sphinx, or Melancholy. I know he had more versions of Tarot cards drawn out, I just don’t have access to it.

His Marseille Deck is the most interesting thing, because this is the living document of what he was thinking about and working with. Now, if you look at it, you see the *aleph* as Mercury as *The Juggler*. Which is insane from many angles, most importantly from the whole *aleph* as a mother letter, it’s not being assigned a planet. But maybe he used Mercury to refer to alchemical correspondence? See this is the problem with Levi. He just did so much, I genuinely can’t tell. On *The High Priestess* he notes from what I can see Sibilla, Sophia and most importantly the fucking Moon in the corner. And Again, he assigns Venus to the *The Empress* and *gimel,* then Jupiter to *daleth* and *The Emperor* - and then continues with *heh* as *The Hierophant* with Saturn floating there like what? Mars to *vav* to *The Lovers*? Sun to *zayin* to *The Chariot*? What is this Man DOING? He just gave up. Stopped giving a shit. But the darndest thing is that he also decoupled Archangels from the planets and just assigned them to the following seven cards. For example, Samael, connected to Mars, is just hanging out on *The Justice*, *chet*. Raphael to *tet* and Hermit, and so on.

Again, this isn’t their planet at all, it's like he decoupled the earlier correspondences he gave and just focused on the order, or imagery. And later cards have classes of angels, again, decoupled from Sefirot and just laid out there. Mind you angels are attributed days or planets, and this could be some insane connection I can’t decipher (It does suggest uh, going down some hierarchy numerically, like planets -> archangels -> hierarchy of angels), but this is merely an addendum and I already. went through the length of proving his system is a beastly chimera. This is merely adding more info I learned after my writeup.

THERE IS NO SANTA, THERE IS NO EASTER BUNNY AND THERE IS NO “CORRECT” ORDER OF CORRESPONDENCES.

ADDENDUM 2 - The fucking Letters to Eliphas' favourite boy student

When creating a bibliography, I came across a book, which contains around 180 letters Eliphas wrote to one of his students. I was aware of the 10 letters which he wrote to another guy, which contain very distilled notes on Qabbalah, but these letters above fully escaped my notice. As such, I am covering them here. Can this guy leave me the fuck alone ?

As a reminder, his planetary attributions carried forward by the French school:

Beth: Reflection, thought, the moon, the angel Gabriel, prince of mysteries;
Ghimel: Love, will, Venus, the angel Anael, prince of life and death;
Daleth: Strength, power, Jupiter, Sachiel Melech, king of kings;
Caph: Violence, struggle, work Mars, Samael Zebaoth, prince of the phalanxes;
Phe: Eloquence, intelligence, Mercury, Raphael, prince of sciences;
Resch: Destruction and regeneration, Time, Saturn, Cassiel, king of tombs and solitudes;
Tau: Truth, light, the Sun, Michael, king of the Elohim.

Numérologie et kabbale is a 1996 bound release containing all of his letters to his student Baron Spedialeri who was the one to publish them after Levi's death.

So, I don't know how much trust I should show these letters, really, but I choose to include them and trust in them, unless a serious doubt is cast.

In these letters he strongly suggests reading Pistorius' *Artis cabalistic*, ESPECIALLY his *Sefer Yetzirah* translation. So it was his main source, and yet the SY in it simply doesn't flow into his attributions at all. (Letter 5)

You know that the three mothers are: Aleph, Mem Shin, or Aleph, Mem, Thau, because Shin and Thau are two opposing and analogous letters that represent being and life, as we shall see later. Thus is formed the word Ameth, which is at the beginning of this letter and which means: peace, justice, and truth. (8)

So in 1861, when he also released T*he Key to the Mysteries*, he did know the correct mother letters, so perhaps it was a blind after all, but wait did HE? *Tau* is NEVER a mother letter! This category is indeed meaningless to him!

In his lessons on *beth*, he mentions it is a reflection, the Moon to the Sun. So, I finally got hope he would explain his logic. But he explains it like this:

The figures of the binary are: the son who is the splendor of the father, the word which is the form of thought, or to give words their proper gender, it is speech fertilized by the spirit, the moon which ***reflects*** *the sun, the woman which* ***reflects*** *man, water which* ***reflects*** *the sky. The binary of God is Chocmah, which for us is the unity having Binah as its binary. In other words, God sees himself reflected in his supreme wisdom, and we conceive of him in the mirage of this mirage: for Chocmah is reflected in us. From the notion of this wisdom emanates the idea of intelligence: In lumine tuo videbimus lumen. Chocmah and Binah are*

*the two supports of the supreme Crown which represents for us the kingship of the Invisible. They are the two columns of the throne, t**hey are the two obelisks of Solomon,** they are the two arms of the apocalyptic angel, they are the Elohim. (Letter 31)*

Again, he comes up with the facsimile and implicitly genders it, or gives words their proper gender. Now, his whole analogue is confusing, but the reflection of God is Chokmah, which corresponds to Wisdom, and then we see that Wisdom and it reflects in us as Intelligence. You may notice that he is doing something a little sneaky, which is treating a group of three as just a chain of binaries, which, Awesome. Love when he does his silly things. Why didn't he save this for the third letter lecture, I will never understand. Why did it NEED to be forced into the Binary lesson?

In his septenary focused letters, he applies Seven Christian Virtues to the Columns of the Solomon Temple, in a rather wretched clone of Tree of Life (Letter 114). I hope I don't need to say that's a fucking idiotic thing to do to what is a text of Jewish mysticism. Although some grace should be given, this is Masonic theft of Jewish influences, not his. He also explicitly calls out three of the seven archangels and gives them different titles than in *Keys of the Mystery* (Letter 117), but corresponds them properly (Michael Sun, Gabriel Moon and Raphael Mercury) (Letter 122). Miracles can happen and Levi can indeed not contradict himself. But he also says that Michael is the Angel of Joachim, and Gabriel of Bohas (two columns of the Solomon temple). Do I even need to say that that is not their attribution based on his letters in *The Key*. It *does* appear as one of the assigned meanings in *Zohar* based list in *Kabbala Denudata, Tabula Secunda Clavis fublimioris Kabbalæ, de ordine divinorum Nominum pro refoletione difficilioruni Enigmatum Libri Sohar.* One among many attributionsthere! However, he doesn't give a fuck. Again, different levels of symbolisms, he's just gonna treat them differently because fuck YOU. YOU the person reading this and trying to figure him out.

Letter 123 just drives that shit in:

The four angels whose names are not revealed in the Bible correspond to the symbolic planets: Mars, or strength; Jupiter, or justice; Venus (modest or Urania), temperance; and old Saturn, or prudence. They are still missing from the earth and must one day constitute morality on an unshakeable foundation, just as the first three angels constituted dogma: Michael, the ternary unity of God represented by Aleph; Gabriel, the incarnation or binary manifestation of the creator represented by Beth; and Raphael, redemption, signified beforehand by Gimel. (Attributions in Letter 127)The names on which there is the most agreement are those of Anael, given to the angel of chastity and love, and Samael, given to the angel of justice and punishment. This Samael, among the Hebrews, sometimes lends his name and his ministry to Satan, whom he then calls the uncircumcised Samuel, and the name of Anael is sometimes confused with that of Astarte, the Venus of the Sidonians. This must indeed be the case, since the four great geniuses of morality have not yet manifested their light. They are known only by their shadow.

So. Now he is just fully talking about four virtues. In his mythological explanation - four virtues which correspond to unnamed angels, yet to be revealed to humanity, which will happen during the events of the Revelation. The three named archangels correspond to Christian Virtues and a visible Dogma. He doesnt give a fuck about correspondences.

Also Gabriel is feminine because he visited a woman once (He's the messenger to Mary in Annunciation). Fuck, cooties work on angels too?

And there is a funny thing he does where he applies letters of Tetragrammaton to a fucking Catholic Church twice in a row (Letter 14):

1. The object of faith - yod;

2. The infinite law as its object - he;

3. The worship that makes faith fruitful - vau;

4. The believing and practicing people - he.

The Church is the outward form of religion; religion makes the Church by manifesting itself outwardly, just as yod produces he.

The Church makes religion by manifesting it. The union of the two is represented by the cross + and the power of the cross is poured into the chalice (second he).

The Church does not subsist without four indissoluble and inseparable things:

1. A head, always the same according to the spirit, and, consequently, mysterious and divine-

2. An unchanging symbol-

3. A perpetual sacrifice-

4. An infallible school of teaching-

The Church, like us, has a spirit and a body …

So his conclusions and assignments once again start to feel very much like syncretism of his own ideas, rather than something he took from some ancient wisdom. He just uses all this shit in different spots differently and will change it! He doesn't GIVE a shit! It is ironically a perfect use case for Tarot as the organization principle of things, applied in the worst ways possible!

Masonic rites and Jewish mysticism both are just tools that come to Levi fundamentally as something to come to represent universal religion, which is Christianity. This is a conclusion we keep coming to with Levi. He is just a continuation of Christian Cabbalah history, in a surprisingly occult outfit. I mean he admits so himself:

The current evil from which the visible body of the Roman Church is dying is spiritual anarchy; I have said this often enough in my works. But if my mother becomes leprous and infirm, is she any less my mother? (Letter 14)

And he is a homophobic (Letters 163 and 164), who is surprised? Man, misogyny, insane anti-semitism AND hatred for "the effeminate"? Awesome! Before people complain, yes, homophobia didn't exist yet because homosexuality as a distinct identity has not been

named yet. However the exact logic he uses has been used as part of violent oppression and murder of gender non-conforming people and people who desired and reached for same-sex for centuries. He names it as a crime against nature. The final *heh* in Tetragrammaton, is the one power to denounce this evil of "effemininity", and that final *heh* is seen as the second generative principle, Nature. (Yes, I do wish he kept the four-letter name the fuck alone, why do you ask?) His darling, beloved leprous mother of the Church said so and he has to put it into his esotericism, which is really just an apologist narrative in a trench coat.

However, here I admit, I don't know, maybe someone else will find the proper logic here in these letters. I am too tired and ready to be done, again, I have shit to do. This is a legit energy barrier.

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